

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
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**A CRITICAL EDITION OF *TOCHMARC FERBE*
WITH TRANSLATION, TEXTUAL NOTES
AND LITERARY COMMENTARY**

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ABSTRACT

Thesis Title: A Critical Edition of *Tochmarc Ferbe* with Translation, Textual Notes and Literary Commentary

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This thesis provides a critical edition of the longest extant version of the medieval Irish text *Tochmarc Ferbe* ('The Wooing of Ferb'), accompanied by translation, textual notes and literary commentary. *Tochmarc Ferbe* is found in two manuscripts, the Book of Leinster (LL) and Egerton 1782. This comprises three versions of the text: a short prose account in Egerton 1782, and a long prosimetric account in LL, followed in the same manuscript by a poetic account.

After a preliminary analysis of the relationship between these three versions, the edited text of the long prosimetric version (LL-prose) is presented, alongside a facing-page translation. Issues arising from the text, in terms of interpretational difficulties, literary features and metrical analysis of the poems, are discussed in the form of textual notes. A particular focus is the prevalence of textual correspondences between *Tochmarc Ferbe* and other medieval Irish tales, many of which are identified as direct textual borrowings by the author of this text.

The thesis concludes with a literary commentary focusing on the role of women in the LL-prose version. It is argued that its depictions of a wide range of female characters challenge traditional assumptions about medieval Irish attitudes towards women, which tend to focus on their supposed passivity and negativity. The portrayals of two female characters are singled out as especially noteworthy. Queen Medb, frequently viewed as the archetypal expression of negative attitudes towards power-wielding women in medieval Irish literature, is shown to receive a positive depiction in this text. Meanwhile, the main female protagonist Ferb is characterised by her use of speech, which dominates the text in a manner almost unparalleled in medieval Irish literature. It is argued that she subverts the usually passive role of lamenter by channelling her grief into an active force, offering an alternative model of positive female action.

PREFACE

This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text.

It is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted, or is being concurrently submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. I further state that no substantial part of my dissertation has already been submitted, or is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text.

The thesis does not exceed the prescribed word limit for the English Degree Committee, including footnotes, references and appendices but excluding the bibliography. Permission has been granted to extend the word count to include appendices of 7000 words.

This dissertation is written in conformance with the ASNC style-sheet.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Primary Sources

<i>AnS</i>	<i>Acallam na Senórach</i> (ed. Stokes)
<i>CA</i>	<i>Cóir Anmann</i> (ed. and transl. Arbuthnot)
<i>CCath</i>	<i>In Cath Catharda</i> (ed. and transl. Stokes)
<i>CIH</i>	<i>Corpus Iuris Hibernici</i> (ed. Binchy)
<i>CRR</i>	<i>Cath Ruis na Ríg</i> (ed. and transl. Hogan)
<i>DCDM</i>	<i>De Chophur in Dá Muccida</i> (ed. and transl. Roider)
<i>IÆ</i>	<i>Imtheachta Æniasa</i> (ed. and transl. Calder)
<i>LMU</i>	<i>Loinges mac nUislenn</i> (ed. and transl. Hull)
<i>MU</i>	<i>Mesca Ulad</i> (ed. Watson)
<i>SMMD</i>	<i>Scéla Muicce Meic Dathó</i> (ed. Thurneysen)
<i>TBC-LL</i>	<i>Táin Bó Cúailnge</i> from the Book of Leinster (ed. and transl. O’Rahilly)
<i>TBC-LU</i>	<i>Táin Bó Cúailnge</i> from <i>Lebor na hUidre</i> (ed. and transl. O’Rahilly, <i>Táin Bó Cúailnge: Recension I</i>)
<i>TBC-St</i>	the Stowe version of <i>Táin Bó Cúailnge</i> (ed. O’Rahilly)
<i>TBC-YBL</i>	<i>Táin Bó Cúailnge</i> from the Yellow Book of Lecan (ed. Strachan and O’Keeffe)
<i>TBD</i>	<i>Táin Bó Dartada</i> (ed. and transl. Windisch)
<i>TBDD</i>	<i>Togail Bruidne Da Derga</i> (ed. Knott)
<i>TBF</i>	<i>Táin Bó Fraích</i> (ed. Meid, <i>Táin Bó Fraích</i>)
<i>TF</i>	<i>Tochmarc Ferbe</i>
<i>TTr</i>	<i>Togail Troí</i> from the Book of Leinster (ed. and transl. Stokes, <i>Togail Troí: The Destruction of Troy</i>)
<i>TTr²</i>	<i>Togail Troí</i> from MS H.2.17 (ed. and transl. Stokes, ‘The Destruction of Troy’)

Languages

Early ModIr	Early Modern Irish
Eng.	English
Lat.	Latin
MidIr	Middle Irish
OIr	Old Irish

Other

CMCS	<i>Cambridge / Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies</i>
Diplom.	Diplomatic edition of the Book of Leinster (ed. Best, Bergin and O’Brien)
eDIL	Electronic Dictionary of the Irish Language (www.dil.ie/)
Eg	Egerton 1782
EIV	McCone, <i>The Early Irish Verb</i>
Facs.	Facsimile of the Book of Leinster (ed. Atkinson)
ISOS	Irish Script on Screen (www.isos.dias.ie/)
ITS	Irish Texts Society
OGSM	Old Irish Glossing of <i>Senchas Már</i>
OIGR	McCone, <i>A First Old Irish Grammar and Reader</i>
RC	<i>Revue Celtique</i>
RIA	Royal Irish Academy
SnG	Breatnach, ‘An Mheán-Ghaeilge’, in <i>Stair na Gaeilge</i>
TCD 1339	Dublin, Trinity College 1339 (H.2.18), known as ‘The Book of Leinster’
ZCP	<i>Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie</i>

This thesis is a critical edition of the longest surviving version of the medieval Irish tale *Tochmarc Ferbe* ('The Wooing of Ferb'), accompanied by a translation, textual notes and a literary commentary focusing on the role of female characters in this version. This fascinating tale has been undeservedly neglected: past scholarly references to it have tended to be limited to passing comments in footnotes, but it is thoroughly deserving of its own full-length study. This thesis presents some of its most noteworthy aspects, besides deciphering its many textual complexities. The tale *Tochmarc Ferbe* is attested in two manuscripts, the Book of Leinster (LL), pp. 253–9, and Egerton 1782 (Eg), 69v–70r. LL contains a lengthy prosimetric version of the tale, concluding with a long poem which is presented as an account of the tale's events composed by Conchobar's poet. The LL-text is acephalous, owing to a lacuna in the manuscript. Eg contains a complete but much shorter prose account of the tale, with a single poem (a prophecy in metrical form). Both versions of the tale describe it as a *remscél* 'fore-tale' to *Táin Bó Cúailnge*.¹ Both versions were previously edited by Windisch in 1897, with a German translation.² An English translation based on Windisch's German translation was produced by Leahy in 1902.³ A diplomatic transcription of the LL-version may be found in Bergin, Best and O'Brien's diplomatic edition of LL.⁴

Manuscripts

The Book of Leinster

Dublin, Trinity College 1339 (H.2.18) has been called the Book of Leinster since 1847, although it was previously known as the Book of Glendalough. As Best has shown, it is in fact neither, but actually *Lebor na Núachongbála*, named for Oughaval in Co. Laois.⁵ LL is a compilation of a wide variety of material, both secular and religious, prose and verse. It contains two sections of Ulster Cycle material, one headed by *TBC* and the other a collection of *remscéla*. *TF* is found in the latter section.⁶

In spite of the variety and inequality of the script, Best argues that this manuscript was the work of a single scribe, who signs his name on p. 313: *Aed mac meic Crimthaind ro srib in leborso 7 ra*

¹ On *remscéla*, see Backhaus, 'Structure of the List'; Chadwin, '*Remscéla Tána Bó Cualngi*'.

² *TF* (ed. and transl. Windisch).

³ *Courtship of Ferb* (transl. Leahy).

⁴ Diplom., pp. 1137–61.

⁵ Best, 'Introduction', p. xii.

⁶ It should be noted that Diplom. does not follow the arrangement of material in the medieval manuscript, but that of Atkinson's Facs. However, since then, O'Sullivan has produced a table of contents showing both the Facs. and medieval foliation ('Notes', p. 31), which has been reproduced in a more user-friendly version by Schlüter (*History or Fable?*, pp. 226–43). Duncan's changes to the attribution of texts to particular scribes should also be noted ('Reassessment', pp. 35–6). However, as it happens, the position of *TF* within LL is not greatly affected by this.

thinoil a llebraib imdaib.⁷ Best attributes the variety in the script to varying working conditions and the compilatory nature of the scribe's activities, drawing on a range of sources.⁸ However, in O'Sullivan's view, 'this is to ignore the different types of formal and informal script and the abrupt transitions from one style to another', although O'Sullivan does conclude that the scripts share a 'close family relationship'.⁹ O'Sullivan revolutionised our understanding of this manuscript and the way in which it was compiled. He identifies four main hands: A (Áed), F, T and U, and two subsidiary hands which each only occur once: M and S.¹⁰ This analysis of the scripts in LL has been further developed by Duncan, who divides O'Sullivan's Hand T into four different hands (T1–4), thereby proposing nine principal scribes who participated in the compilation of LL.¹¹ *TF* is in the hand of scribe U. Schlüter emphasises the evidence which shows that the scribes were working as a team with a fixed plan in mind, and concludes that the manuscript was carefully composed according to this plan, with the scribes using 'transitional passages' to guide the user between subjects.¹² As to who was in charge of this plan, O'Sullivan suggests that T oversaw the compilation of the manuscript and describes him as 'the real composer of LL as we know it'.¹³ Duncan gives a more nuanced view, which suggests that the latest scribe, T2 (who wrote those passages used by O'Sullivan as evidence for the role of 'T' as compiler), does seem to have been responsible for having an overview of LL and making some changes to texts, but that A and T1 were also active in this regard.¹⁴

The date of LL is difficult to ascertain, particularly since, as Duncan shows, the scribes may have been writing at different times and over a period of many years. The *terminus post quem* is generally agreed to be 1151, as the poem *Fianna batar i nEmain* refers to the battle of Móin Mór fought in that year (this is in A's hand). Duncan's study includes an attempt to work out when each scribe was writing, or at least their order relative to one another, and concludes that the outer limits for the compilation could potentially have been 1151/1224, although only T2 was writing in the thirteenth century.¹⁵ Duncan suggests that the *TF*-scribe U was writing after 1147 and in collaboration with A who was active in 1151/1163.¹⁶

In terms of the manuscript's provenance, the textual evidence of LL reveals an interest in and bias towards affairs in the province of Leinster, and so some scholars have argued that LL could have been commissioned by Diarmait mac Murchada, king of Leinster (d. 1171), as part of a campaign to assert royal power.¹⁷ However, O'Sullivan rejects the view that this was a 'patron's book' and instead

⁷ Best, 'Introduction', p. xv: 'Áed Húa Crimthaind wrote this book and collected it from many books'.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. xvii.

⁹ O'Sullivan, 'Notes', p. 6.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹¹ Duncan, 'Reassessment', pp. 29–34.

¹² Schlüter, *History or Fable?*, p. 23.

¹³ O'Sullivan, 'Notes', p. 26.

¹⁴ Duncan, 'Reassessment', pp. 59–60.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 51–9.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

¹⁷ For example, Mac Eoin, 'Provenance of the Book of Leinster', p. 92.

interprets it, in the context of twelfth-century Irish church reform, as ‘the last fling of the learned ecclesiastics of the unreformed Irish church’, a manuscript written by ecclesiastics for themselves.¹⁸ Other scholars have sought a more specific location for the production of the codex. Smyth argues that this was the monastery of Clonenagh, since this was the principal monastery of the territory of the O’Moore (Co. Laois), in whose territory Oughavall, the medieval provenance of LL, is also located.¹⁹ However, Mac Eoin points to the notable absence of material concerning the Loígisi, which would be surprising in a manuscript compiled in Laois; he argues that it was compiled in Uí Fháilgi, and of the two monasteries capable of such a production, he prefers Kildare to Killeigh, as the latter became an Augustinian priory in the mid-twelfth century, and moreover there is evidence that the bishop of Kildare was involved in the compilation of the manuscript.²⁰

Egerton 1782

London, British Library, Egerton 1782 has been dated by Flower, on the basis of various scribal entries, to 1516–18, with most of the work on the manuscript having been done in 1517. The manuscript’s contents cover a wide range of subject matter, literary, historical and religious, written in both prose and verse and probably copied from different manuscripts.

Flower identifies at least four hands: a main scribe A, and three others, B, C and D. Indications of staining led Flower to conclude that the manuscript was written in separate sections, representing a general division by subject, which were not united for some time. One of Flower’s sections (written in the hand of scribe A) is made up of *TBC*, preceded by its *remscéla*, in which *TF* is the second tale (after *LMU*).²¹ Scribal notes indicate that the manuscript was written by scribes of the family of Ó Maoilchonaire, probably for the most part at Cluain Plocáin in Co. Roscommon, but some of the early part may have been written in Leinster.²²

¹⁸ O’Sullivan, ‘Notes’, p. 26.

¹⁹ Smyth, *Celtic Leinster*, p. 102.

²⁰ Mac Eoin, ‘Provenance of the Book of Leinster’, p. 94.

²¹ Flower, *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts* II, 262–3. Burnyeat considers this group of *remscéla* in relation to extant lists of *remscéla* as a means of assessing medieval Irish approaches to classification and compilation, although she does not discuss *TF* (‘*Táin*-complex’).

²² Flower, *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts* II, 259–62.

The Tale-list Evidence

The language of the extant versions of *TF* dates to the MidIr period.²³ However, before considering the content of these versions, evidence for the earlier existence of this tale should be mentioned. Such evidence is often sought with reference to titles found in the two extant tale-lists (lists of tales categorised by tale-type). These are known as List A, recorded in LL and in Dublin, Trinity College 1336 (H.3.17) (fourteenth- or early fifteenth-century), and List B, embedded in the tenth- or eleventh-century tale *Airec Menman Uraird maic Coisse*.²⁴ The title by which our tale was known cannot be ascertained unequivocally, since the text lacks a title in both LL and Eg. Nevertheless, there are two medieval Irish titles which, it has been suggested, may have referred to some version(s) of this tale (although not necessarily those extant). The first title is *Tochmarc Ferbe*, attested in List A but not in List B. It seems likely that the title *Tochmarc Ferbe* refers to a version of our text, since no other tales about Ferb survive. Meanwhile, there is also a second title, *Fís Conchobair* ('The Vision of Conchobar'), attested in both Lists A and B, which Thurneysen claims to refer to the same tale, on the basis of the correspondence between this title and the opening of the long poem at the end of the LL-version: *Aslinge Conchobair chóir*.²⁵ He supports this argument with evidence from a comparison of the two extant lists of *remscéla*, attested in LL, p. 245b, and Dublin, RIA D.4.2 (possibly fifteenth-century), f. 47v. Thurneysen observes that the list of *remscéla* in LL contains the incomplete title *De Thochmurc ...* (which he would emend to *De Thochmurc Ferbe*), while the list in D.4.2 gives the title *Do Aislingthi Conchobair* in the equivalent place, indicating that these titles might both refer to the same tale.²⁶ Since both titles plausibly refer to key events in the tale, it seems likely (particularly if Thurneysen's emendation is correct), that versions of this tale were known by two different titles, both of which were included in at least one of the tale-lists.

As Toner observes, the value of the tale-lists is that 'they often support an early date for tales that are only found in later manuscripts'.²⁷ Thus determining the point at which these titles entered the tale-lists may provide evidence for the earliest attestation of a version of this tale. However, there has been some debate concerning the dating and contents of the hypothetical lists which may have preceded A and B. Mac Cana argues that A and B were derived from a single parent-list (X) but each were then substantially reworked, while X itself had been expanded from an earlier form (O). He dates X to the tenth century.²⁸ Mac Cana's theory has since been challenged by Toner, who notes that B is a

²³ Windisch, 'Tochmarc Ferbe', pp. 449–50; Mac Cana, 'Prosimetrum', pp. 103–4; see also 'Linguistic Analysis', pp. 10–28, with reference to the LL-prose version of *TF*.

²⁴ For editions of these tale-lists, see Mac Cana, *Learned Tales*, pp. 33–65.

²⁵ *TF* (ed. Windisch, p. 518; my transl.): 'The vision of just Conchobar'.

²⁶ Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden- und Königsage*, p. 351.

²⁷ Toner, 'Reconstructing the Earliest Irish Tale Lists', p. 88.

²⁸ Mac Cana, *Learned Tales*, pp. 66–84.

compilation of two lists: only the second half of B (B^X) corresponds to A and so must derive from X, which itself may date to as late as the twelfth century. He suggests that X essentially resembled A, while B may have been using a version of X with a large lacuna.²⁹ Meanwhile, he claims that O may date to no earlier than the tenth century. He suggests that O was characterised by a structured use of alliteration, especially ‘paired alliteration’, and that the contents of O can therefore hypothetically be identified from extant titles which obey this rule (although O cannot be definitively reconstructed in its entirety).³⁰

The ramifications of Toner’s argument for our text are as follows: the title *Tochmarc Ferbe* is only attested in A. B has a list of *tochmarca* but this title is not included; this is in the section of B (B1) which Toner claims was derived from an independent source. Toner includes the title *Tochmarc Ferbe* among those titles which display paired alliteration, suggesting that it may have been included in list O (its absence in B^X would then have to be attributed to the hypothesised lacuna in the version of X used by B). Meanwhile, *Fís Conchobair* is attested in A and in B^X, indicating it was included in list X. It is found in the section of the text identified by both Mac Cana and Toner as an appendix which was added to O at a later date. However, according to Toner, since *Fís Conchobair* belongs to a small number of titles in this appendix which display paired alliteration, this title seems to belong to a fairly early stage of O’s development.

If we accept Toner’s argument, therefore, it is possible that some version of our tale (or more than one) was known by two different titles in the tenth century (although note his assertions that the tale-lists, or individual titles in them, may be of a later date than this). Such conclusions must be accompanied by the *caveat* that tale-lists were artificial, learned constructs and so may not be reliable witnesses to knowledge of any particular tale beyond certain scholars’ interests. Moreover, the attestation of a particular title in a tale-list does not tell us what form of the tale the creator or redactor of the list had in mind: it may not have resembled any of the extant versions of a particular tale. Nevertheless, the presence of these titles in the tale-lists does suggest that some form of narrative about Ferb, and possibly a related one concerning a vision received by Conchobar, may have been known two centuries before the dates of either the linguistic content or the manuscript witnesses of our extant versions.

The Extant Versions

To turn to these extant versions, then: as stated above, the text is attested in two manuscripts, the twelfth-century Book of Leinster and the sixteenth-century manuscript, Egerton 1782. However, these actually comprise three versions of the tale: a short prose account in Eg (Eg-prose), and a long prosimetric version in LL (LL-prose), followed by a poetic account of the tale (LL-poem), which is distinct from the other poems interspersed throughout the LL-prose. Therefore, we in fact have three

²⁹ Toner, ‘Reconstructing the Earliest Irish Tale Lists’, pp. 91–8.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 100–13.

extant versions of this narrative, rather than merely two. The relationship between these three versions is complex. Although the LL-poem is appended to the LL-prose, which introduces the poem as *glónāthe airchetail co cummair do chumnigud in scéoil sin*,³¹ the version of events it narrates corresponds almost exactly with the Eg-prose account (as regards content and sometimes even wording), rather than with the LL-prose account that precedes it. This suggests that the Eg-prose and LL-poem reflect a different strand of the textual tradition to that narrated in the LL-prose.³²

The version of events given in the Eg-prose and LL-poem is much shorter than that found in the LL-prose. To summarise this shorter version, the tale starts with the Otherworldly woman visiting Conchobar, prophesying the *Táin* and advising him to attack Maine, who is already at Gerg's fort. When Conchobar attacks Gerg's fort, Gerg is killed by Brod, and Maine is killed by Conchobar later in the same attack. The Otherworldly woman then visits Medb and informs her of Maine's death. Medb engages Conchobar in battle but is defeated. The Eg-prose and LL-poem agree in certain details, such as that Conchobar's wife advises him against his attack on Gerg's fort, that the druid at Gerg's fort utters a prophecy before Conchobar's attack,³³ and that Medb kills Conchobar's two sons in the final battle.³⁴ There are also points of difference between the LL-poem and the Eg-prose. For example, in the Eg-prose, just before Conchobar's attack on Gerg's fort, we are told that Gerg's retinue contains groups of thirty men, each with the same name. This information is not conveyed at this point in the LL-poem; however, at the end of the poem, in the enumeration of warriors who have been killed, groups of thirty men with the same name are listed here instead.

The LL-prose consists of a much longer and more detailed narrative. The key events of the tale remain the same: Conchobar's vision, Gerg's and Maine's deaths, Medb's vision and her defeat, suggesting that these formed the basic structure of the original source-tale from which all three versions derive (see Fig. 1). The LL-prose also shares the details of Conchobar's wife's advice, the cryptic druidic prophecy and Medb's killing of Conchobar's two sons (although with different names); all three also end with the identification of the tale as a *remscél* to *TBC*. However, there are many additional events which are only narrated in the LL-prose. This version starts with Maine setting out from Crúachain (although the start of this is missing in the manuscript) and arriving at Dúnad Geirg where the omen of a mighty wind prompts an additional druidic prophecy. Conchobar's questioning of Cathbad and the enumeration of the Fomorians in his army is also only present in this version. The ordering of the narrative surrounding Gerg's and Maine's deaths is slightly different, since after Gerg's death Maine initially repels the attackers successfully, and the Otherworldly woman visits Medb before

³¹ *TF*, l. 633: 'a poetical composition to commemorate that tale in summary'. For a discussion of the word *glónāthe*, see 'Textual Notes', p. 110.

³² Windisch, 'Tochmarc Ferbe', p. 451.

³³ Containing the cryptic words *brod ind airdig* (or similar), seemingly referring to Gerg's imminent death at Brod's hand; see 'Textual Notes to the Verse', pp. 156–7.

³⁴ A list of specific verbal agreements between the Eg-prose and LL-poem is given by Windisch ('Tochmarc Ferbe', p. 453).

Maine has been killed, thus prophesying rather than reporting his death. This is also the only version to contain references to Maine's two foster-brothers, Fíannamail and Domnall, their incitement by Ferb and subsequent deaths in battle, as well as the laments uttered by Nuagel and Ferb and their deaths.

Intriguingly, there are also places where the LL-prose and Eg-prose share details not attested in the LL-poem. In a minor but striking correspondence, the description of Maine's troops at the start of the LL-prose contains an image expressing the value of the rivets on the men's spears: *C̃ta no dlestá míach óir do cech fír díb, no ícfad seim gaī cech fír díb é*,³⁵ and this same image occurs in the Eg-prose to describe Maine's men once they are assembled in Gerg's fort.³⁶ They also share a major plot element, the carrying-off of the vessel *Ól nGúala* from Gerg's fort by the Ulaid at the end of the tale.³⁷

Fig. 1: Key events in the LL-prose, LL-poem and Eg-prose versions of *Tochmarc Ferbe*

LL-prose	LL-poem	Eg-prose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maine's departure from Crúachain and arrival at Dúnad Geirg • omen of the wind and druid's prophecy 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conchobar's vision, wife's advice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conchobar's vision, wife's advice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conchobar's vision, wife's advice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cathbad's prophecy, Fomorian army 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Brod ind airdig</i> prophecy, Brod kills Gerg 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Brod ind airdig</i> prophecy, Brod kills Gerg 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Brod ind airdig</i> prophecy, Brod kills Gerg
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nuagel's lament, Maine repels invasion 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medb's vision – Conchobar kills Maine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conchobar kills Maine – Medb's vision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conchobar kills Maine – Medb's vision
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ferb's laments, deaths of Fíannamail and Domnall 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medb's battle with Conchobar (kills his two sons) – Medb defeated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medb's battle with Conchobar (kills his two sons) – Medb defeated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medb's battle with Conchobar (kills his two sons) – Medb defeated
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ulaid carry off <i>Ól nGúala</i> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ulaid carry off <i>Ól nGúala</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deaths of Nuagel and Ferb 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identified as <i>remscél</i> to <i>TBC</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identified as <i>remscél</i> to <i>TBC</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identified as <i>remscél</i> to <i>TBC</i>

Each of the three versions has a different form, since we have a prose version (containing one metrical prophecy), a poetic version, and a prosimetric version, containing a number of poems

³⁵ *TF*, l. 19: 'Although each man should owe a bushel of gold, a rivet of the spear of each man would pay for it'.

³⁶ *TF* (ed. Windisch, p. 550).

³⁷ See '*Ól nGúala*', p. 162.

expressing characters' monologues (prophecies, laments) and dialogues.³⁸ However, Windisch's characterisation of the LL-prose as a 'Prosaerzählung mit eingelegten Gedichten' is problematic, since this implies that the poems were not an integral part of this version but were added later.³⁹ While it is true that none of them advance the plot and so could be removed without affecting the storyline, there is no evidence to suggest that this version ever existed without its poems; rather, given how naturally they fit into the narrative, it seems likely that they were composed alongside the prose of this version. Windisch himself acknowledges that in their current form, none of these poems can be shown to date to earlier than the surrounding prose.⁴⁰ He offers a number of examples where MidIr forms cannot be emended without affecting the metre: for example, in ll. 233–4 *thair : da-rochrabair*, the MidIr verbal ending is protected by rhyme; in ll. 285–6 *Mani : i n-ōenbali* has rhyme between nom sg (OIr *-e*) and dat sg (OIr *-iu*); in ll. 369–70 *chride : urnaide* has rhyme between internal unstressed syllables.

The Relationship between the Versions

The question of the textual relationship between these three versions and the processes by which they developed into their extant forms is complex. In order for it to be answered fully, all three versions would need to be edited and analysed side-by-side. Unfortunately, such a project would be too large for the scope of a PhD thesis. For this reason, I have limited myself to editing only the LL-prose version, which is the longest and so provides ample material to be analysed on its own.⁴¹ Although there is arguably a case for including the LL-poem as part of this edition, since it is presented in LL as forming a single version with the LL-prose, the textual tradition laid out above indicates that the underlying situation was more complicated than this. Since the LL-poem is so closely related to the Eg-prose, an edition of the LL-poem would necessarily also entail editing the Eg-prose (or at least consulting it in such detail as to have essentially edited it). The LL-prose meanwhile stands more independently and so can profitably be edited and discussed alone, at least as a preliminary stage. I hope that in a future study I will also be able to edit the other two versions.

Therefore, at this stage, any conclusions relating to the textual tradition of *TF* must necessarily be cautious. Windisch was similarly tentative in his conclusions, although he did suggest some outlines for the text's development. He claims that the archetype of the tale was a short prose narrative (already containing one poem), which has been preserved (with some alterations over the course of its transmission) in Eg. He places the LL-poem in the same stage of development of the tale as the Eg-prose. He views the LL-prose as a later form of the tale, in which the narrative gained a more elaborate

³⁸ Windisch referred to these poems as 'Situationsgedichte' for this reason ('*Tochmarc Ferbe*', p. 446); see also Mac Cana, 'Prosimetrum', pp. 110–11.

³⁹ Windisch, '*Tochmarc Ferbe*', pp. 445–6. Later (p. 449) he suggests that the *TF* poems may have been the work of different poets, citing the unusual form of Poem IX as possible evidence for this (Poem IX is discussed in 'Textual Notes to the Verse', p. 146).

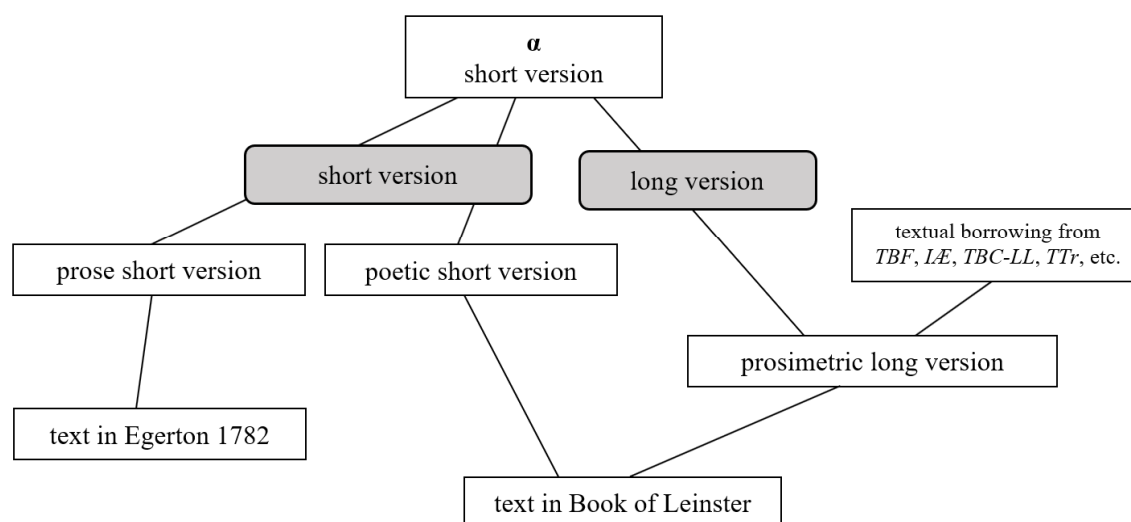
⁴⁰ Windisch, '*Tochmarc Ferbe*', p. 449.

⁴¹ Throughout the rest of this thesis, for '*Tochmarc Ferbe*', read 'the LL-prose version of *Tochmarc Ferbe*' unless stated otherwise.

literary form and a number of new characters, and characters' speeches were given in verse.⁴² Meanwhile, Thurneysen asserts a more direct relationship between the Eg-prose and the LL-poem, stating that the Eg-prose 'ist also deutlich eine Bearbeitung des Gedichts', and that the LL-poem must have originally existed on its own: 'es ist kein Zweifel, daß es die Grundlage der ganzen Überlieferung bildet'.⁴³ As such, he claims that this is one of the oldest examples of a purely secular narrative told in poetic form. In Thurneysen's view, the LL-prose was based both on the poem and on the shorter prose version. However, Mac Cana has criticised Thurneysen's interpretation, especially his assumption that the LL-poem is the earliest form of the tale and that it should be identified with the tale referred to in the tale-list. As Mac Cana observes, the language of the poem is of no earlier date than the other two versions, and he agrees with Windisch that the whole textual tradition of the tale is likely to go back to a shorter prose version.⁴⁴

My preliminary conclusions at this stage are as follows: in terms of narrative outline, it is clear that two versions of *TF* have come down to us, a shorter and a longer version (see Fig. 2).

Fig. 2: Possible stemma for *Tochmarc Ferbe*



The shorter version is attested in both a prose and a verse account, which largely agree with one another. Although one is not necessarily the source for the other, they must both belong to a 'short-version' branch of the textual tradition. The lack in this short version of many of the additional details only attested in the LL-prose (as regards names of minor characters, for example) suggests that this 'short-version' branch was not influenced by the 'longer-version' branch of the tradition.⁴⁵ Perhaps the simplest explanation for this is that the shorter version may represent an earlier telling of the story,

⁴² Windisch, 'Tochmarc Ferbe', pp. 459–60.

⁴³ Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden- und Königsage*, p. 352; see also Thurneysen, 'Zur irischen Grammatik', p. 66.

⁴⁴ Mac Cana, 'Prosimetrum', p. 104.

⁴⁵ Windisch, 'Tochmarc Ferbe', p. 455. Thus the LL-poem cannot have been composed specifically for the context in which it is presented at the end of the LL-prose.

while the longer version represents a later expansion of this brief tale, elaborating its central events and adding additional events, characters and speeches around them.⁴⁶ The further complicating factor in this textual tradition is that the two ‘branches’ have been combined in the LL-text as a whole, since a poetic ‘short-version’ text has been appended to a ‘long-version’ text. This was not done mindlessly, but rather the LL-poem has been carefully incorporated into the narrative of the LL-prose by presenting it as the version of events composed by Conchobar’s poet (thereby accounting for any divergence from the preceding prose), although whether this clever assimilation was performed by the composer of the LL-prose or by a later redactor cannot be known. The relationship between these three versions is clearly complex and cannot be untangled here. A future study which examines all three versions side-by-side in order to analyse more closely how they might be related is certainly desirable. However, such an undertaking falls outside the scope of this thesis.

Linguistic Analysis

The preliminary analysis of the relationship between the versions of *TF* delineated above has indicated that the LL-prose seems to be a later version of this text. A linguistic analysis of this version may give further indications as to its date. A wide range of MidIr forms are attested in *TF*, details of which are given below. The MidIr period has been classified by scholars as falling roughly between 900 and 1200 AD, following the OIr period (c. 650–900 AD) and preceding the Early ModIr period (c. 1200–1500 AD).⁴⁷ Naturally these periods in the development of the Irish language were not rigidly demarcated, but rather the language was in a continual state of change and evolution, and the MidIr period saw a continuation of changes which had already begun in OIr.⁴⁸ MidIr is often characterised as undergoing a period of particular flux, where innovatory forms (probably already current in the spoken language of earlier centuries) mingled with the stricter and fuller range of forms found in the more conservative, standardised language of the learned classes reflected in OIr. Interaction between these forms led to a certain level of confusion and thereby attempts at simplification or disambiguation, as well as hypercorrection. Changes occurred in both phonology and morphology, both of which I will discuss here, drawing on the most recent studies of MidIr: Breatnach’s chapter ‘An Mheán-Ghaeilge’ in *Stair na Gaeilge*, and the MidIr sections of McCone’s *A First Old Irish Grammar* and *The Early Irish Verb*.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Some of this additional material seems to have been acquired through borrowing from other texts; see ‘Textual Correspondences’, pp. 85–6.

⁴⁷ *SnG*, p. 221; McCone, ‘Prehistoric, Old and Middle Irish’, p. 22; Breatnach, ‘Lebor na hUidre’, pp. 53–4.

⁴⁸ For example, McCone has observed that ‘MidIr’ features are attested in the eighth- and ninth-century Würzburg and Milan Glosses (‘Würzburg and Milan Glosses’).

⁴⁹ Further discussions of MidIr may be found in the Appendix to Jackson’s edition of *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne* (pp. 77–140) and Mac Eoin, ‘Dating of Middle Irish Texts’, pp. 110–12 (on pp. 113–34 he considers the difficulties associated with editing MidIr texts).

1. Phonology and Orthography

1.1 Unstressed vowels: A key development that had already occurred by the ninth century was the loss of distinction between short unstressed vowels, which all become reduced to /ə/, resulting in widespread confusion of previously distinct spellings.⁵⁰ In particular, certain nouns and adjectives lost most inflectional distinctions.

Especially affected were io- and iā-stem nouns and adjectives, which largely lost all case distinction except in the dat pl. Examples of io-stem nouns displaying this feature in *TF* include: l. 58 *sidi* (OIr nom sg *side*); l. 65 *glónáthi* (OIr acc sg *-e*); l. 114 *airdi* (OIr nom sg *airde*); l. 244 *cridi* (OIr dat sg *-iu*); l. 612 *chēle* (OIr gen sg *-i*).

Examples of iā-stem nouns displaying this feature in *TF* include: l. 55 *fáilti* (OIr nom sg *fáilte*); l. 256 *aidchi* (OIr gen sg *-e*); l. 269 *fāstini* (OIr nom sg *fáitsine*); l. 408 *glaini* (OIr nom sg *glaine*); l. 519 *chrūadi* (OIr nom sg *crúaide*). In l. 8 *isind ara līniu ... isin līne aile*, two different spellings are given for the same grammatical form following the preposition *i*. According to eDIL, *līne* was originally a fem iā-stem, but later became masc.⁵¹ Because of the variation in spelling within this phrase, it is unclear whether the noun was viewed as masc (OIr dat sg *-iu*) or fem (OIr dat sg *-i*) here.

Examples of io/iā-stem adjectives displaying this feature in *TF* include: l. 4 *forloiscthi* (OIr dat sg masc *-iu*); l. 8 *uile* (OIr acc pl *-i*); l. 16 *buide* (OIr dat sg masc *-iu*); l. 25 *glainidi* (OIr nom sg masc *-e*); l. 112 *urndide* (OIr voc sg masc *-i*).

Other nouns and adjectives were also affected; for example, o-stems: l. 13 *charput* (OIr gen pl *-at*); ll. 43, 180 and 619 *dúnud* (OIr acc sg *-ad*);⁵² l. 100 *coscur* (OIr nom sg *coscar*); ā-stems: l. 21 *grēni* (OIr gen sg *gréine*); l. 27 *nēmannaib* (OIr dat pl *-aib*); l. 192 *lámi* (OIr gen sg *-ae*); i-stems: l. 161 *hallmuri* (OIr acc pl *-e*); u-stems: l. 309 *turthed* (OIr nom sg *tairthiud*); dental stems: l. 538 *nāmtē* (OIr acc pl *náimtea*); s-stems: l. 44 *tigi* (OIr nom pl *-e*).

There are also some examples where other parts of speech were affected, such as verbs or conjugated prepositions. Examples of verbal forms displaying this feature in *TF* include: l. 104 *déni*, from *do-gní* (OIr imperative 2sg *-e*); l. 176 *féta*, from *fétaid* (OIr pres subj 2sg *-ae*); l. 299 *snaidfeá*, from *snaidid* (OIr fut 2g *-fe*); l. 29 *rabi*, from *at-tá* (OIr perf 3sg dep *-rabae*); l. 385 *ba*, from the copula (OIr fut 1sg *be*, *bea*). Examples of conjugated prepositions displaying this feature in *TF* include: l. 46 *fria* (OIr *frie*, prep *fri* + pron 3sg fem); l. 452 *fóraind* (OIr *fornn*, *forunn*, prep *for* + pron 1pl).

This falling-together of unstressed vowels also affected preverbs, meaning that *da* could be found for *do* and *ra* for *ro*;⁵³ for example: l. 63 *da-bar-ró*; l. 397 *da-rochair*; l. 402 *da-rochratar*; l. 90

⁵⁰ *OIGR*, p. 175.

⁵¹ eDIL, s.v. *līne*.

⁵² Note that Windisch suggests emending these forms to *dúnad*, but this is not necessary, since *TF* contains many examples of the falling-together of unstressed final vowels ('*Tochmarc Ferbe*', p. 466, n. 2; p. 478, n. 3; p. 516, n. 2).

⁵³ *EIV*, p. 169.

ra tócbait; l. 532 *ra chind*; l. 608 *ra-sochtatar*. In the case of l. 271 *no ndígēla*, this confusion seems to have occurred in reverse, since this is intended for *na ndígēla* (*no* + infix 3sg masc).

1.2 Hiatus: As early as the OIr period, hiatus disyllables began to undergo contraction to monosyllables with a long vowel and these latter forms predominated over the former in MidIr.⁵⁴ This can be seen in l. 51 *rót* (OIr *rout*).⁵⁵ Hiatus forms did survive in MidIr, as seems to be attested in the verse in *TF*, where hiatus is required to provide the line with seven syllables, such as l. 204 *ócléch*.⁵⁶ Poem XI contains the forms of the substantive verb *bias* and *biat* which historically contained hiatus (ll. 582, 590 and 605). However, all of these lines are problematic: l. 582 still only has six syllables even with hiatus, l. 590 has seven syllables without hiatus (Windisch suggests *leg. 'cot*),⁵⁷ and l. 605 requires hiatus to provide seven syllables but includes a late analytic verbal form, so that it is surprising to find an old phonetic form occurring alongside a morphological innovation. Moreover, although the verse in *TF* predominantly has seven syllables per line, this is not regular, so it remains uncertain whether we should analyse any of the forms occurring in the verse as containing hiatus or not. Note that there are no rhyming examples of hiatus in this text.

1.3 Reduction of proclitics: Disyllabic proclitics were frequently reduced to monosyllables by the ellipsis of a final or initial short vowel.⁵⁸ This may be seen in *TF* in the loss of *-o* when the preverbal particle *ro* is preceded by another conjunct particle; for example, ll. 480 and 545 *nīr* (OIr *níro*).⁵⁹

1.4 Diphthongs: There could be alternation between the diphthong *áe/aí/óe/oí* and a single long vowel. Breatnach cites as evidence of this the rhymes in *TF*, ll. 273–4 *do-gní : a-taí*; ll. 535–6 *ndéni : ēcaíni*.⁶⁰

1.5 Assimilation of consonants: There was little change to the consonant system in MidIr, although there was the assimilation of OIr *ln, nd, mb > ll, nn, mm*.⁶¹ The assimilation of *nd > nn* is frequently seen in *TF*; for example: l. 18 *cóicrinnechaib* (OIr *rindech*); l. 49 *innossa* (OIr *indossa*); l. 66 *grānni* (OIr *gránda*); l. 274 *cinnas* (OIr *cindas*); l. 609 *grinni* (OIr *grinde*). The assimilation of *mb > mm* is also found; for example, ll. 399 and 416 *immi* (OIr *imbi*, prep *im* + pron 3sg masc).

This then led to hypercorrect spellings of *nd* etc. where the historic form contained *nn*. These forms occur extremely frequently in *TF*; for example: l. 6 *dond* (OIr *donn*); l. 7 *find* (OIr *finn*); l. 89 *do-béraind*, from *do-beir* (OIr *cond* 1sg *do-bérainn*); l. 102 *etrund* (OIr *etrunn*, prep *eter* + pron 1pl); l.

⁵⁴ *SnG*, p. 231; *OIGR*, p. 176.

⁵⁵ Note l. 326 *rout*; however, the presence of hiatus cannot be determined except in verse.

⁵⁶ See ‘Textual Notes to the Verse’, p. 134.

⁵⁷ Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, p. 512, n. 5.

⁵⁸ *OIGR*, p. 176.

⁵⁹ *SnG*, pp. 279–80; *EIV*, p. 188.

⁶⁰ *SnG*, p. 233.

⁶¹ *OIGR*, p. 177.

105 *rand* (OIr *rann*); 1. 202 *comlund* (OIr *comlann*); 1. 242 *uillendcha* (OIr *uillenncha*); 1. 361 *glend* (OIr *glenn*); 1. 566 *galand* (OIr *galann*); 1. 599 *cholaind* (OIr *colainn*). The word *cend* occurs particularly often in this text, alongside various derivatives, and almost never with its original spelling *cenn*; for example, ll. 93, 138, 181, 281, 357, 491, 599; cf. also 1. 12 *cendmílaib*; 1. 257 *ro dīchend*; 1. 322 *dīchendugud*.

1.6 Metathesis: Certain consonant clusters underwent metathesis.⁶² There are a handful of words that occur in *TF* only in forms that display metathesis; these are: ll. 34 and 522 *faichthi* (OIr *faithche*); ll. 105, 116 and 269 *fāstini* (OIr *fáitsine*); ll. 175 and 455 *bidbaid* (OIr *bibdu*).

1.7 Confusion between *d* and *g*: The merging of lenited *d* and lenited *g* as /ɣ/ in later MidIr meant that there could be confusion between lenited *d* and *g* in spelling; for example, 1. 435 *ḡannaidi* (OIr *ḡanaige*).⁶³

1.8 Lack of palatalization: Although not necessarily a MidIr feature, it should be noted that, in many words in *TF*, palatalization of consonants has not been registered in the spelling where this would be expected (presumably a scribal variation). A small sample includes: 1. 6 *Mani* (*Maine*); 1. 21 *ruthni* (*ruithen*); 1. 43 *frithālim* (*fritháilem*); 1. 45 *tastil* (*taistel*); 1. 58 *hāne* (*áine*); 1. 65 *glónáthi* (*gló(š)náithe*); 1. 248 *fergi* (*feirge*); 1. 269 *fāstini* (*fáitsine*); 1. 519 *chrūadi* (*crúaide*); 1. 571 *thursi* (*tuirse*).

2. Nouns

2.1 Loss of neuter: The neuter gender began to disappear by the ninth century and this continued in MidIr.⁶⁴ The form of the definite article in these examples from *TF* indicates that these nouns were now being thought of as masc rather than neut: 1. 182 *in dorus*; 1. 183 *in cend*; 1. 183 *issin tech*; 1. 634 *in scēl-so*. Breatnach also notes that neuter nouns gained new forms of the nom and acc pl based on the masc pl forms.⁶⁵ This is attested in *TF* at 1. 184 *na cinnu* (OIr acc pl *cenna*). In *TF*, the neuter only seems to survive in fossilised phrases where the following nasalisation was retained; for example, 1. 25 *rosc n-airard n-adanta*; 1. 51 *rót n-urchair*; 1. 255 *cechtar n-aí*. Breatnach notes in particular that in the case of *mór* in its usage as a substantive (originally neuter), the fossilised following nasalisation continues throughout the MidIr period; for example, ll. 197 and 588 *mór n-ingen*; ll. 512 and 589 *mór mban*; 1. 590 *mór n-airecht*.⁶⁶

⁶² *SnG*, p. 234; *OIGR*, p. 177.

⁶³ *OIGR*, p. 177; Breatnach, 'Lebor na hUidre', p. 74.

⁶⁴ *OIGR*, p. 179; *EIV*, p. 171.

⁶⁵ *SnG*, p. 243.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 239.

2.2 Changes to noun stems: In the MidIr period, certain nouns changed stem-class. For example, in *TF* the gen sg form *écht* (l. 84) indicates that *écht* is no longer being declined as a u-stem (OIr gen sg -o/-a); the acc/dat sg form *chobais* (l. 458) indicates that *cobais* is no longer being declined as a nasal stem (OIr acc sg *coibsin*). In particular, due to the falling-together of unstressed final vowels, many nouns lost their distinctive endings and borrowed the more distinctive dental-stem endings.⁶⁷ Examples from *TF* include: l. 1 *lénti* (OIr iā-stem nom pl *léini*); l. 56 *airighi* (OIr o-stem nom pl *airic*); l. 319 *fraigid* (OIr i-stem acc sg *fraig*).

Also of relevance to *TF* is McCone's observation that fem nouns like *geis* could acquire non-palatal variants.⁶⁸ Windisch argues that the rhyme *gess : amles* (ll. 235–6) does not work, since strictly *geis* ends in a palatal consonant, so he interprets *can gess* as *ce aingcess* ('obwohl ein Fluch').⁶⁹ However, this is simply a MidIr form of *geis* without the palatalization (although note that here it is masc although it is more usually fem).

2.3 Spread of forms to different cases: Confusion arose between nom and acc forms, which began to be interchangeable, through analogy with the large group of masc nouns (o-stems, i-stems, u-stems) where nom and acc forms were identical.⁷⁰ This may be seen in *TF* in the case of l. 246 *mílid*, where the acc sg form is used for nom sg (OIr nom sg *míl*); l. 549 *dígail*, where the acc sg form is used for nom sg (OIr nom sg *dígal*); l. 632 *fíli*, where the nom sg form is used for acc sg (OIr acc sg *filid*).⁷¹ I would argue that this is also the case for l. 61 *in géth*, where translating *gáeth* as the object seems to make more sense, but the form is nom sg (OIr acc sg *gaíth*); note, however, that Windisch interprets it as nom sg: 'was dieser Wind bewirkt hat'.⁷² In l. 589, *glangáeth* must be intended for the vocative (treating the adjective as a substantive), but the form is nom sg (OIr voc sg *gaíth*).

2.4 Loss of the independent dative: The independent dative was lost during the MidIr period, although it did still survive in fossilised phrases; for example, l. 481 *a ōenur* ('in his single person', i.e. alone). In appositional use, where the independent dative might have been used in OIr, the nominative is used instead.⁷³ In *TF*, this usage only occurs in the nom pl phrase *trí coícait*, where a dative of accompaniment would have been used in OIr; for example: l. 99 *ērig-siu trī coīcait Fomōrach*; l. 133 *luid iārum Conchobar trī choīcait lāech impu-sin*; l. 415 *do-roacht Fīannamail trí choícait lāech cucu*.

⁶⁷ *OIGR*, p. 183.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

⁶⁹ Windisch, 'Tochmarc Ferbe', p. 536, n. to l. 293; p. 485.

⁷⁰ *OIGR*, p. 180.

⁷¹ Alternatively, this last form may simply have resulted from the loss of the final /-ð/.

⁷² Windisch, 'Tochmarc Ferbe', p. 533, n. to l. 93.

⁷³ *SnG*, p. 241.

2.5 MidIr forms: Certain MidIr forms of nouns are attested in *TF*; for example: l. 204 *ócléach* (in MidIr *óclach* was analysed as *óc* + *láech*); l. 400 *nefní*, with MidIr stem *nef-* (OIr *neimnī*); l. 571 *thursi* (*tuirse*, later form of *toirse*).

3. Adjectives

3.1 Changes to pl endings: Original nom pl masc forms of o/ā adjectives started to be replaced by forms with *-a*.⁷⁴ Examples of this feature in *TF* include: l. 3 *claidib debennecha mōra*; l. 7 *sréin dēlīnecha*; l. 135 *claidib tromma tortbullecha*. The OIr dat pl ending *-(a)ib* was generally retained by nouns but replaced by acc pl */-ə/* in the case of the article and adjectives; an example of this from *TF* is l. 187 *ina lámaib cléi*.⁷⁵ All examples of MidIr adjectival endings in *TF* are found with attributive adjectives, which is the predominant type of adjective in this text in any case.

3.2 Comparative: Comparative adjectives may be followed by *de*, which corresponds in meaning to Lat. *eo*, Eng. ‘the’ (as in ‘the greater’). In MidIr this was always enclitic and written together with the comparative as *-te*, *-ti*;⁷⁶ this is found in *TF* at l. 125 *móti* (comparative adj *mó*); l. 365 *nī lugaite* (comparative adj *lugu*).

3.3 MidIr forms: Certain MidIr forms of adjectives are attested in *TF*; for example: l. 29 *leór* (OIr *lór*); l. 222 *deg-* (OIr *dag-*); l. 570 *dóig* (OIr *dóich*). According to eDIL, the intensifying prefix *imm-* is rare in OIr but becomes very common by Early ModIr.⁷⁷ This is attested in *TF* at l. 13 *imlebur*.

4. The Article

4.1 Generalisation of pl article *na*: There was generalisation of the plural article *na*, spreading to masc nom pl (OIr *in*, *ind*, *int*).⁷⁸ This can be seen in these masc nom pl examples from *TF*: l. 123 *na slúaig*; l. 457 *na Connachtaig*; ll. 617–18 *na ferchutredaig*.

4.2 Change to dat pl article: The OIr dat pl ending *-(a)ib* was generally retained by nouns but replaced by acc pl */-ə/* in the case of the article and adjectives.⁷⁹ Examples of this feature in *TF* include: l. 10 *dona echaib*; l. 29 *frisna slabradaib*; l. 29 *isna conaib*; l. 217 *icna hūarānaib-se*; l. 332 *dona trī coīcdaib*; l. 539 *isna tressaib*.

⁷⁴ *OIGR*, p. 184.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

⁷⁶ eDIL, s.v. 5 *de*.

⁷⁷ eDIL, s.v. 2 *imm*.

⁷⁸ *OIGR*, p. 184.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

5. Numerals

5.1 Dual: Dual forms of articles and nouns were lost, and the plural was used instead, as was the case for adjectives even in OIr.⁸⁰ In the case of l. 26 *cechtar a dā gruad*, the OIr dual gen form would be *gruaide* (s-stem), so the use of *gruad* here either means that the dual nom form is being used instead of the dual gen, or that *gruad* is not being treated as an s-stem here but rather has gained a generalised gen pl form (OIr gen pl *gruaide* as well) – the latter is perhaps more likely. On the other hand, there are some examples in *TF* where the dual does still seem to be being used correctly, possibly in fossilised phrases; for example: l. 3 *dā maelgāi* (OIr nom pl *gae*); l. 94 *dā maelassa fīndruine* (the lenition after the noun suggests this might be dual nom).

In the case of ll. 241–2 *dā sleig slemungéra uillendcha móra*, the correct dual acc form of *sleg* has been used (OIr acc pl *slega*); however, the form of the numeral is masc rather than fem (OIr *dí*) even though *sleg* is a fem noun. Similarly, l. 17 *dā chaindill* displays the correct dual nom form of *caindel* (OIr nom pl *caindela*), but the numeral is masc even though *caindel* is a fem noun.

5.2 Forms of numerals: There was a loss of distinction between masc and fem forms of the fully-inflected adjectival numerals 2–4, generally in favour of the masc form. In the case of ‘four’, the old nom pl *cethair* became confined to independent usage while OIr acc pl *ceithri* was used for nom pl as well.⁸¹ This can be seen in these nom pl examples from *TF*: l. 15 *cethri óa*; l. 563 *cethri chēt* (the lenition here is fossilised from a historical neuter).⁸² With regard to the ordinals, there was a tendency for *ind ala* ‘the other, the second’ to be dissimilated to *ind ara*, as can be seen in *TF* at l. 8 *isind ara līniu*.⁸³

In OIr, numerals were followed by pl nouns; however, on the analogy of neut nouns with the same sg and pl forms, numerals began to be followed by sg forms in MidIr.⁸⁴ This can be seen in *TF* at l. 31 *trī druí* (OIr nom pl *druíd*).⁸⁵

5.3 Personal numerals: A MidIr innovation was the use of personal numerals as simple numbers followed by a noun in the gen pl.⁸⁶ In OIr, these personal numerals were only used on their own, while nouns were preceded by simple numerals. Examples of this feature in *TF* include: l. 30 *mórfeisiur cornaire*; l. 180 *cūiciur Fomōrach*; l. 253 *nōnbur Fomōrach*; l. 326 *nōnbor maccōem*.

⁸⁰ *OIGR*, p. 187.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 186–7.

⁸² *SnG*, p. 261.

⁸³ *OIGR*, p. 187.

⁸⁴ *SnG*, p. 262.

⁸⁵ Windisch’s emendation to *druí[d]* is therefore unnecessary (*Tochmarc Ferbe*, l. 50).

⁸⁶ *SnG*, p. 262.

6. Adverbs and Conjunctions

6.1 MidIr forms of adverbs: Certain MidIr forms of adverbs are attested in *TF*; for example: l. 233 *thair* (OIr *tair*); l. 484 *ummore* (OIr *immurgu*); l. 570 *amáin* (OIr *nammá*). Particularly common is *noco*, the MidIr weakened form of OIr *nícon* (for example, ll. 29, 50, 403, 515, 611).

6.2 MidIr uses of conjunctions: The use of certain conjunctions in *TF* indicates a MidIr date. For example, the use of the conjunction *co + ro* to express wishes, as in l. 104 *corop hí do-gnēis*, is identified by Murphy as a late MidIr feature.⁸⁷ Moreover, the tautological *mad dīa* (*má* ‘if’ + pres subj 3sg of the copula + *dīa* ‘if’) often took the place of *má* ‘if’, as in ll. 293 and 300.⁸⁸

6.3 MidIr forms of conjunctions: Certain late forms of conjunctions are attested in *TF*; for example: l. 334 *i céin* (OIr (*in*) *céin*, using the adjective *cían* as a conjunction); l. 412 *air*, the predominant spelling of the conjunction *ar* in MidIr. The conjunction *ocus* can be found in its shortened form *is* (or ‘s) even in OIr poetry, but these shortened forms occur much more frequently in MidIr poetry.⁸⁹ There are numerous examples in *TF* (ll. 375–7, 392–5, 456, 503, 534).

7. Pronouns

7.1 Infix pronouns: The distinctive pronominal form *-s* (OIr 3sg fem and 3pl) began to be used as a 3sg masc/neut infix pronoun as well.⁹⁰ Sometimes an infix pronoun still seems to be being used correctly, although it can be hard to tell if it is intentionally being used correctly or if it is just coincidence that the form and the original person associated with that form happen to align, once the distinctions between the forms became less rigidly applied.

There are examples from *TF* where the infix pronoun still seems to be being used correctly; for example: l. 438 *ram fōrraig* (1sg); l. 373 *corot gāet* (2sg);⁹¹ l. 439 *ra-fētar* (3sg neut – although this might be an example of main clause lenition instead (see below)). The 3sg masc infix also occurs: l. 323 *ro n-immir*; l. 325 *ro ndírig*; although the falling-together of unstressed vowels means that here we have *ro* for *ra* (see above), the following nasalisation indicates that this form contains a 3sg masc infix pron. In the case of l. 329 *ro n-ecrand*, the verb is pres 3sg, with a late MidIr ending, while *ro* seems to have been used instead of *no* to infix the 3sg masc pronoun (see below). This correct use of the infix pronoun alongside a late verbal form is noteworthy. There are also examples of the correct usage of the 3sg fem infix pron: l. 52 *conas gabat* (referring to *bunsach*); l. 525 *ros frecair* (referring to Ferb); and the 3pl infix pron: l. 56 *dos-rochtatar*; l. 314 *dos-ratsat* (used reflexively); l. 610 *ros dírig* – although,

⁸⁷ Murphy, *Early Irish Lyrics*, p. 255.

⁸⁸ *SnG*, p. 281.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 331.

⁹⁰ *OIGR*, p. 194; *EIV*, p. 171.

⁹¹ Note that the distinctive 1sg and 2sg infix pronouns even survive into Early ModIr poetry.

as stated above, it may be coincidence that these pronouns happen to align with their intended meaning, given the generalisation of the form *-s*.

In the case of l. 393 *ras cuir*, the infix refers to *gaí* and, although *gaí* could be nom pl meaning the infixed pronoun was correct, *gaí* as nom sg makes more sense so this is likely to be an example of the spread of the *-s* form. An infixed pronoun also occurs in ll. 179–80 *ros geib sroigled 7 essorcon do cech aí*. Breatnach interprets this as a rare use of the infixed pronoun with the function of the genitive.⁹² However, I would argue that the indirect object of the verbal nouns is expressed by *do cech aí*. Therefore, this may be an example of the infixed pronoun being used proleptically: ‘he began it, i.e. striking and beating’, displaying the spread of the *-s* form (since *sroigled* is masc).

There was also confusion between the classes of infixed pronouns.⁹³ There are examples in *TF* where Class A infixed pronouns are used instead of Class C; for example: l. 524 *dīana tairsed* (OIr *dianid*).

7.2 New forms of infixed pronouns: New 1pl and 2pl infixed pronouns (*(a)r* and *far/bar*) were created based on the possessive pronouns, by analogy with the 1/2sg infixed pronouns (*(m)t*) which resemble the form of the possessive pronoun following a vowel.⁹⁴ This new 2pl pronoun is attested in *TF* at l. 63 *da-bar-ró*; l. 499 *ro-for-rép*.

7.3 Fossilisation of the neuter infix: The loss of the neuter (see above) deprived the 3sg neut infixed pronoun of its inherited function so that it became virtually meaningless. Forms with a petrified 3sg neut infix tended to displace those without it; thus *at-* replaced preverbs such as *as-*, *ad-*. Moreover, preverbs ending in a final vowel, such as *ní* and *ro*, might be followed by lenition due to the influence of the lenition caused by a 3sg neut infix.⁹⁵ Examples of the preverb *at-* in *TF* include: l. 47 *at-chiu*, l. 301 *at-chonnaire* (OIr *ad-cí*); l. 434 *at-beri*, l. 624 *at-berthea* (OIr *as-beir*); l. 622 *at-aig* (OIr *ad-aig*). Examples of lenition after other preverbs in *TF* include: l. 51 *fo-cheirt*, *fo-cheṅgat*; l. 129 *do-chuaid*; lenition after *ní*: l. 118 *nī fīl*; l. 332 *ní thérna*; lenition after *ro*: l. 59 *coro chrithnaig*; l. 252 *ro thaffniset*; l. 259 *nāro chomraicset*; l. 485 *ro chan*; l. 531 *ro thuit*. In cases where the leniting preverb is followed by *f-*, as in l. 40 *coro fēram*; ll. 105–6 *ro fīreair*; l. 634 *ro fālsig*, the *f* was silent and so might be omitted; for example: l. 218 *fo-úarais* (OIr *fo-fuarais*); l. 272 *ro recair*.

7.4 Independent object pronouns: An innovation in later MidIr is the use of the independent object pronoun instead of the infixed pronoun.⁹⁶ McCone notes that ‘there was a marked tendency to place the

⁹² *SnG*, p. 265.

⁹³ *OIGR*, p. 195; *EIV*, p. 170.

⁹⁴ *SnG*, p. 267; *OIGR*, p. 195; *EIV*, pp. 169–70.

⁹⁵ *OIGR*, p. 195; *EIV*, pp. 171–3.

⁹⁶ *SnG*, p. 271; Breatnach, ‘Lebor na hUidre’, pp. 69–70.

stressed object pronoun at the end of its clause'.⁹⁷ There are several examples of the independent object pronoun in *TF* (note placement at the end of the clause); for example: l. 19 *no ícfad seim gaī ... é*; ll. 105–6 *ro fíreair Cathbad hé*; l. 257 *ro díchend Mani ē-sium*; ll. 566–7 *ro díchend Feradach hé*; l. 625 *i n-ibthea hí*; l. 238 *ro marb sé sinni 7 sé*. In the last example, the form of the object pronoun *sé* is noteworthy, since *é* is the usual form, but eDIL notes that *sé* sometimes replaces *é*, in the 'earliest instances in the phrases *ol sé* and *ocus sé*' (as here).⁹⁸ Sometimes the independent object pronoun was found alongside an old infixed pronoun.⁹⁹ This can be observed in *TF* at ll. 617–18 *nos-berat ... hí*.

7.5 Independent subject pronouns: Independent subject pronouns were already used in OIr in identifying sentences. Breatnach observes that such sentences are the only instance where the neut pronoun *ed* survives in MidIr.¹⁰⁰ In *TF*, at l. 308 *trícha láech dano ba hed a lín*, it is being used to refer back to the masc sg noun *trícha*. Independent subject pronouns gained wider use in MidIr. A MidIr innovation is their use in predicative sentences, as in *TF* at l. 175 *bidbaid duit-siu sind uile*.¹⁰¹

7.6 Analytic verbal forms: Of particular significance in late MidIr is the occurrence of analytic verbal forms, in which the 3sg form of the verb is used with an independent subject pronoun instead of the verb having a personal ending.¹⁰² Breatnach notes that the vast majority of such forms are found in texts from LL (as compared with other manuscripts from the MidIr period).¹⁰³ Indeed, although the majority of verbal forms in *TF* are synthetic, there is a notably high number of analytic verbal forms (five in total), which is a key piece of evidence for suggesting a late MidIr date for this text; for example: l. 39 *ro-fítir mē*, pret-pres 3sg verb + 1sg pron (OIr pret-pres 1sg *ro-fetar*); l. 89 *cenco beth sib*, past subj 3sg verb + 2pl pron (OIr past subj 2pl *no bethe*); l. 238 *ro marb sé*, perf 3sg verb + 3sg pron (OIr perf 3sg *ro marb*); l. 430 *in marend hé*, pres 3sg verb (with MidIr ending *-enn*) + 3sg pron (OIr pres 3sg *-mair*); l. 605 *nī biat sīat*, fut 3pl verb + 3pl pron (OIr fut 3pl *-biat*).

In the last example, the late MidIr form of the 3pl subject pronoun *sīat* is used. eDIL notes that it is 'used with the copula, after *ocus*, and as the subject of an active finite verb'.¹⁰⁴ This form also occurs in l. 449 *7 sīat i n-ōenbaile* (here after *ocus*).

7.7 Other pronouns: Breatnach notes the occurrence in MidIr of the disyllabic form of the relative pronoun *ana/ina* (OIr *a*).¹⁰⁵ This occurs in *TF* at l. 193 *cenmothá ina torchair ria muntir*. Certain MidIr

⁹⁷ *OIGR*, p. 193; see also *EIV*, p. 176.

⁹⁸ eDIL, s.v. 2 *sé*.

⁹⁹ *SnG*, p. 272; Breatnach, 'Lebor na hUidre', p. 71.

¹⁰⁰ *SnG*, p. 269.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 270.

¹⁰² *SnG*, p. 272; *OIGR*, p. 193; *EIV*, p. 177.

¹⁰³ Breatnach, 'Lebor na hUidre', p. 72.

¹⁰⁴ eDIL, s.v. 1 *sīat*.

¹⁰⁵ *SnG*, p. 276.

forms of other pronouns are also attested in *TF*; for example: l. 403 *féni* (*féine* is a MidIr form of *fadéin*, *féin*); the demonstrative pronoun in l. 61 *sein*, ll. 330 and 426 *sain* (OIr *sin*);¹⁰⁶ the interrogative pronoun *cā* in ll. 108–9, 207–9 and 273 (OIr *cía*).

8. Verbs

8.1 Spread of weak conjugation: An important development in MidIr is the decrease in the number of verbs that are inflected as strong verbs, in favour of the relatively straightforward system employed by weak verbs, which tended to keep the same or similar stem in the different tenses.¹⁰⁷ In *TF* this is particularly seen in the spread of the f-future and the s-preterite. Examples of the f-future include: l. 97 *airgfítir*, fut passive pl of *oirgid* (OIr redupl fut *íurtar*), displaying the later stem *airg-*, *oirg-* which prevails over OIr *orcaid*; l. 598 *na cifea*, fut 3sg of *cüid* (OIr redupl fut *cichid*). Examples of the s-preterite include: l. 327 *ro gon*, l. 470 *ro guin*, perf 3sg of *gonaid* (OIr redupl pret *ro geguin*); l. 376 *coro sil*, perf 3sg of *silid* (OIr redupl pret *ro siblais*); l. 532 *ra chind*, perf 3sg of *cinnid*, a later form of *cingid* (OIr redupl pret *ro cechaing*); l. 629 *ro claided*, perf passive sg of *claidid* (OIr redupl pret *ro clas*); l. 633 *ro chan*, perf 3sg of *canaid* (OIr redupl pret *ro cechain*).

8.2 Formation of simplexes from compound verbs: In terms of compound verbs, one solution to the complexities of the alternation between deuterotonic and prototonic forms was to convert compound verbs into simple verbs, based on their prototonic stem or their verbal noun.¹⁰⁸ This occurs frequently in *TF*; examples include: l. 63 *da-foichlid*, from *foichlid* (OIr *fo-cíallathar*) – although *foichlid* is also the imperative 2pl form of *fo-cíallathar*, the infixing of the pronoun to *do* (for *no*, see below) indicates that this is being treated as a simple verb; l. 101 *dúscis*, from *dúscid* (OIr *do-fíuschi*); l. 138 *īarfaigis*, from *īarfaigid* (OIr *īarmi-foich*); l. 141 *tirchanaid*, as a simple verb (OIr *do-airchain*); l. 173 *ērgid*, l. 300 *ēрге*, from *ēirgid* (OIr *at-reig*); l. 176 *dīa fēta*, from *fētaid* (OIr *ad-cota*); l. 258 *ro immir*, from *imrid* (OIr *imm-beir*); l. 259 *ro chomraicset*, from *comraicid* (OIr *con-ricc*); l. 271 *no ndígēla*, from *díglaid* (OIr *do-fich*);¹⁰⁹ l. 303 *níro ernaíd*, from *airnaidid* (OIr *ar-neät*); l. 305 *togais*, from *togaid* (OIr *do-goa*); l. 325 *ro frithāil*, from *fritháilid* (OIr *fris-áilethar*); l. 329 *impáis*, from *impáid* (OIr *imm-sói*); l. 393 *ras cuir*, from *cuirid* (OIr *fo-ceird*); l. 416 *ro innis*, from *indisid* (OIr *ind-fét*); l. 478 *imthigid*, as a simple verb (OIr *imm-téit*); l. 525 *ros frecair*, from *frecraid* (OIr *fris-gair*); l. 531 *ro thuit*, from *tuitid* (OIr *do-tuit*).

¹⁰⁶ *SnG*, pp. 275–6.

¹⁰⁷ *SnG*, p. 282; *OIGR*, pp. 199–200; *EIV*, pp. 209–11.

¹⁰⁸ *SnG*, pp. 282–3; *OIGR*, p. 210; *EIV*, pp. 191–3.

¹⁰⁹ eDIL, s.v. 1 *do-fich* ‘avenges’ (< **di-fich*-); 2 *do-fich* ‘attacks’ (< **to-fich*-).

Conversely, new compound verbs were also being formed in MidIr. Breatnach interprets l. 521 *ra tromalt* as an example of the formation of a compound verb by combining the adjective *trom* with the verb *ailid*.¹¹⁰

8.3 Loss of distinction between independent and dependent forms: The distinction between independent and dependent forms of the verb was already being lost in certain situations in OIr; for example, in compound verbs where the accented part began with a vowel and the preverb ended with a vowel, the vowel of the preverb could be elided, which meant that the deuterotonic and prototonic forms were identical (e.g. *ticfa* instead of *do-icfa*).¹¹¹ In MidIr, more extensive use is made of dependent forms in places where independent forms are expected. Examples of this from *TF* include: l. 34 *rāncatar* (perf 3pl of *ro-icc*); l. 53 *tairlingit* (pres 3pl of *do-airling*); l. 115 *ticfa* (fut 3sg of *do-icc*); l. 129 *tánic* (perf 3sg of *do-icc*); l. 622 *fúair* (pret 3sg of *fo-gaib*).

8.4 Spread of independent endings: In certain instances, independent endings were used in contexts where historically a dependent ending would have been used.¹¹² Examples of this feature in *TF* include: l. 37 *ticfaithi* (OIr fut 2pl dep *-fid*); l. 53 *tecait* (OIr pres 3pl dep *-at*); l. 186 *tócfait* (OIr pres 3pl dep *-at*). In the case of l. 39 *do-gēntaí, nī anfaidi*, Breatnach takes these as further examples of the independent fut ending being used instead of the dependent ending (OIr fut 2pl *do-génaid, ní anfid*).¹¹³ However, I would suggest that these could equally be conditional forms, in which case the endings are as expected.

8.5 New verbal endings: Many tenses and persons gained new endings. In the present, the pres 1sg ending *-(a)im(m)* began to spread.¹¹⁴ This is attested in *TF* at l. 40 *do-berim*, from *do-beir* (OIr pres 1sg *do-biur*). There was a new pres 2sg form of *as-beir*, which is attested in *TF* at l. 434 *at-beri* (OIr *as-bir*). A particularly significant MidIr feature is the new pres 3sg ending *-ann / -enn*, attested in *TF* at l. 329 *ro n-ecrand*; l. 430 *in marend hé*.¹¹⁵

Analogy was influential in creating new verbal endings. For example, *TF* includes two new pres subj 2sg endings. Breatnach states that l. 104 *do-gnēis* displays a new ending developed through analogy with, for example, *-téis*, the dependent form of pres subj 2sg of *téit*.¹¹⁶ He also states that l. 175

¹¹⁰ *SnG*, p. 287; see ‘Textual Notes to the Verse’, p. 150.

¹¹¹ *SnG*, p. 285.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 316.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 316 and 318.

¹¹⁴ *SnG*, p. 292; *OIGR*, p. 202.

¹¹⁵ *SnG*, p. 293; *OIGR*, p. 202; *EIV*, pp. 207–8.

¹¹⁶ *SnG*, p. 311. Therefore, Windisch’s suggested emendation to *do-gne-si* is unnecessary (‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, p. 472, n. 2).

co fessara displays the new ending *-ra*, developed through analogy with the subjunctive of compound verbs of *beir*.¹¹⁷

In the *ē*-conditional, the passive sg ending *-a* could be used for OIr *-ae*.¹¹⁸ This is attested in *TF* at l. 313 *ní fulénghtha*. In the case of l. 86 *no fáicfíthea*, Breatnach interprets this form as the conditional passive sg (where the final vowel can be written as *-ea* or *-e*).¹¹⁹ However, it might equally be conditional 2pl, although this would likewise display MidIr alternation between *-ea/-e*.

In the preterite, a new 2pl ending *-ba(i)r* arose.¹²⁰ This may have been developed on the analogy of the possessive pron *-bar* being used as a personal ending in the copula.¹²¹ Examples of this feature in *TF* include: l. 234 *da-rochrabair*; ll. 483–4 *do-rochrabair*; l. 489 *fúarabair*; l. 495 *fuarabair*. In the case of the pret 3pl, the ending *-atar/-etar*, which is historically related to strong verbs, spreads to the weak past in late MidIr.¹²² This is attested in *TF* at l. 467 *térnatar*. In the case of the pret passive, the sg ending *-s* spreads, through analogy with verbs such as *ad-cí* (*ad-cess*, *-accas*).¹²³ This is attested in *TF* at l. 63 *tāncas*.¹²⁴

In the perfect, a new 1sg form of *ad-cí* occurred, which is attested in *TF* at l. 351 *at-chonnac*. This is what is given in the MS, although I have emended it in my edition to the older and more common form *at-chonnarc* for the purposes of rhyme (see ‘Textual Notes to the Verse’, p. 140). There was also a new 3sg form of *do-beir*, which is attested in *TF* at l. 255 *co tard* (OIr *-tarat*); and of *ráidid*, which is attested in *TF* at l. 632 *ro ráid* (OIr *ro ráidi/-e*). The MidIr period saw the creation of a more clearly marked perf passive 3pl dependent ending *-(a)it*.¹²⁵ Examples of this feature in *TF* include: l. 53 *coro múchait*; l. 90 *ra tócbait*; l. 567 *ro díchennait*.

The copula gained a new form of the pres 2sg, derived from the suffixed pronoun 2sg *-at*. This is attested in *TF* at l. 596 *isat*.

A MidIr feature affecting various tenses is the lengthening of the vowel in certain personal endings.¹²⁶ Examples of this feature in *TF* include: l. 19 *no dlestá*, past subj passive sg (OIr *-t(h)ae*); l. 39 *do-gēntaí*, conditional 2pl (OIr *-te*); l. 45 *ticfaitís*, conditional 3pl (OIr *-faitis*).¹²⁷ Breatnach cites l. 333 *tafnís* as a rare example of the lengthening of the vowel in a pret 3sg ending (this is more common for other tenses and persons).¹²⁸

¹¹⁷ *SnG*, p. 312.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 322.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 321.

¹²⁰ *OIGR*, p. 206; *EIV*, p. 235.

¹²¹ *SnG*, p. 305.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 301.

¹²³ *EIV*, p. 232.

¹²⁴ Breatnach identifies l. 265 *ní deochas* as a further example of this feature, but *-dechas* is the usual dependent perf passive sg form of *téit* in OIr (*SnG*, p. 307).

¹²⁵ *OIGR*, p. 208; *EIV*, p. 230.

¹²⁶ *SnG*, pp. 290–1; *EIV*, pp. 178–9.

¹²⁷ *SnG*, p. 321.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 291. Alternatively, this might simply be a hair-stroke used to prevent minim confusion.

8.6 New verbal stems: Many verbal forms were affected by the spread of prosthetic *f*. Since an initial vowel in a leniting context might sometimes correspond to *f* + vowel in a non-leniting context, there was a tendency to introduce an unhistoric *f* after preverbs.¹²⁹ Examples of this feature in *TF* include: ll. 50–1 *noco n-facca* (OIr pret 3sg *co n-acca*); ll. 612 and 623 *ro fuc* (OIr perf 3sg *ro ucc*).

The verb *gaibid* gained an *-ei-* stem alongside *-ai-*.¹³⁰ This is attested in *TF* at l. 179 *ros geib*; l. 611 *gebid*. McCone illustrates furthermore that there was fluctuation in the quality of the stem of *gaibid* in MidIr.¹³¹ An example of this from *TF* is l. 173 *gabait* (OIr pres 3pl *gaibit*).

Other verbs gained new stems; for example, *feraid* gained the additional stem *fiur-* in the imperf and fut, as in l. 623 *no fiurad*; while in other cases stems were generalised; for example, the stem *len-* was generalised in the verb *lenaid*, as in l. 618 *ro len* (OIr pret stem *lil-*). Meanwhile, the verb *fóbair* was sometimes treated as if it was a compound with *for-*. Examples of this in *TF* include: l. 177 *foroprait*; l. 312 *forópair*; l. 330 *forfópair* (here with unhistoric *f*).

In the present, *do-tuit* gained new pres 3sg and 3pl forms *do-fuit* and *do-fuittet*, attested in *TF* at ll. 322 and 617. In the case of the substantive verb, the present relative sg form *fil* gained conjugated forms. Examples of this feature from *TF* include: l. 487 *ní fúil*, pres 3sg; l. 286 *fuilet*, pres 3pl.

The verb *as-beir* gained a new form of the imperative 2sg, attested in *TF* at l. 117 *abbair* (OIr *epir*). In fut forms of *do-beir* and *fo-gaib*, *-é-* could be syncopated in open syllables (as was the case with *do-gní* in OIr).¹³² This is attested in *TF* at l. 588 *dia tibre*, from *do-beir* (OIr fut 3sg *-tibéra*). The substantive verb gained a new fut 3pl form *beti*, attested in *TF* at l. 76 (OIr *bieit*). In the case of the verb *ro-finnadar*, the stem *finn-* developed subj, fut and pret forms. In *TF*, the form *fintat* occurs in the MS (l. 427), which seems to be pres subj 3pl; although I suggest emending this to pres subj 2sg *finter* (see ‘Textual Notes to the Verse’, pp. 144–5), this still provides evidence of the spread of the *finn-* stem.

With regard to the preterite, the passive stem could be used as an active stem in some verbs in MidIr, through analogy with certain strong verbs which had the same 3sg dependent form in the active and passive in OIr.¹³³ This may be observed in *TF* with the verb *gonaid*, where the passive stem *gáet-* is used as an active stem; for example, l. 229 *rot gáet*. New stems were gained by the verbs *at-reig* and *do-roich*: *at-raacht* (OIr *at-racht*) and *do-riacht* (OIr *do-roacht*) respectively. In the case of *at-reig*, eDIL suggests that ‘the form *atraacht* occurring occasionally in MidIr may be a dissimilation-form from the perf *atraracht*’.¹³⁴ Examples from *TF* include: l. 194 *at-raacht*; l. 243 *at-raachtatar*; l. 253 *do-riacht*; l. 130 *do-riachtatar*.

¹²⁹ *EIV*, p. 199; *OIGR*, pp. 195–6.

¹³⁰ *SnG*, p. 325.

¹³¹ *EIV*, p. 212.

¹³² *SnG*, p. 315.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 306.

¹³⁴ eDIL, s.v. *at-reig*.

In the perfect, *ad-cí* gained a new 3pl form *at-chonncatar*, attested in *TF* at l. 137 (OIr *ad-condarcatar*). The verb *do-gní* gained a new perfect stem *do-ring-* (OIr *do-rig-*).¹³⁵ This form is attested in *TF* at l. 525 *do-ringni*; l. 465 *do-ringset*. This stem also occurs in the perf passive sg form *do-ringned* (OIr *do-rónad*), which Breatnach further notes as the use of an active stem in the passive, which occurs in some strong verbs in MidIr.¹³⁶ This form occurs in *TF* at ll. 230, 566 and 630.

8.7 Spread of forms to different tenses: There was some spread of forms to different tenses; for example, eDIL states that in MidIr for *do-tuit*, ‘the fut. and cond. are generally used in place of subj.’.¹³⁷ This may be seen in *TF* at l. 176 *do-thaeth*, where the future form is used in place of the subjunctive.

8.8 Changes to preverbs: The preverbs *ro*, *do* and *no* became interchangeable.¹³⁸ Examples from *TF* include: l. 63 *da-foichlid* (*do* for *no*, to infix the pronoun); l. 329 *ro n-ecrand* (*ro* for *no*, to infix the pronoun).

Moreover, the preverb *at-* replaces *ro-* in the verb *ro-cluinethar*, through analogy with *at-chí* (MidIr form of *ad-cí*).¹³⁹ This is attested in *TF* at l. 260 *at-chlos*, and also often alongside the conjunction *ó*, which could cause the elision of initial *a* in verbs compounded with *ad-*; for example, ll. 303 and 525 *ō 't-chuala*. This elision also occurs with *ad-cí*; for example, l. 324 *ó 't-chonnairc*.

8.9 Verbal particles: There are certain changes to verbal particles. For example, an innovation in MidIr is the particle *nó co* ‘until, so that’, *ná co* when there is a negative verb in the preceding clause.¹⁴⁰ This use of *ná co* is attested in *TF* at l. 481. The particle *cenco* also occurs later in MidIr in place of OIr *ceni* ‘although not’, attested in *TF* at l. 427.¹⁴¹ Breatnach claims that the form *cenco* derives from *ce* + *níco(n)* (*ce* as a form of *cía*), while eDIL links it to the preposition *cen*.¹⁴²

8.10 MidIr forms of verbal nouns: Certain MidIr forms of verbal nouns are attested in *TF*; for example: ll. 37 and 251 *tíachtain* (verbal noun of *do-icc*, OIr *tíchtu*); ll. 58, 240 and 350 *bith* (verbal noun of *at-tá*, OIr *buith*); l. 328 *fōrithin* (verbal noun of *fo-reith*); l. 472 and 504 *dula* (verbal noun of *téit*, OIr *dul*).¹⁴³

¹³⁵ *SnG*, p. 325; *EIV*, p. 190.

¹³⁶ *SnG*, p. 308.

¹³⁷ eDIL, s.v. *1 do-tuit*.

¹³⁸ *EIV*, pp. 190 and 197.

¹³⁹ *SnG*, p. 285.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 281.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 281.

¹⁴² eDIL, s.v. *cen*.

¹⁴³ Note that in l. 504 *dul* may have been the original reading based on the syllable count (see ‘Textual Notes to the Verse’, p. 149), while in l. 472 *dul* or *dula* would give the correct syllable count, so in these cases *dula* may be a later addition that occurred in copying.

9. Prepositions

9.1 Changes to cases following preposition: The distinction between acc and dat after prepositions was eroded. In the plural this led to the preference of the more distinctive dat pl ending *-(a)ib* for nouns following a preposition.¹⁴⁴ Examples of this feature in *TF* include: l. 12 *dar borddaib*; l. 315 *dar dorsib*; l. 5 *imma cossaib*, *imma cennaib*; l. 29 *frisna slabradaib*; l. 454 *fri Ulaib*; l. 540 *tria chnessaib*. The use of dat in the pl meant that the use of dat spread to the sg as well; for example, l. 376 *dar grúaid* (OIr acc sg *gruad*).

9.2 Mutations after prepositions: The preposition *eter* causes lenition in MidIr, as may be seen in l. 296 *iter Chrūachain*.¹⁴⁵

9.3 Base-forms of prepositions: The variations in the forms of certain prepositions were the result of the falling-together of unstressed vowels; for example, *ac* or *ic* for *oc*; *a* for *i*; *can* for *cen*.¹⁴⁶ Examples of *ic* for *oc* in *TF* may be found at ll. 42, 137, 262, 479, 568, 585, 620; in combination with the article at l. 259 *icond*; and with a possessive pronoun at l. 197 and 414 *icot* (poss pron 2sg); ll. 10 and 261 *ica* (poss pron 3pl). The form *ac* for *oc* is found in the conjugated preposition at l. 30 *aice* (+ pron 3sg masc). There are also examples of *a* for *i* (l. 451), and *can* for *cen* (l. 235).

Other prepositions developed new forms, including *tria* for OIr *tre* (as may be seen at ll. 540 and 571); *ba* for *fo* (as may be seen at l. 566, in the phrase *fo dí* ‘twice’); and *ás* for *ós*, *úas* (as may be seen at l. 609 *ās cind*).¹⁴⁷ Breatnach also notes that *á* was a MidIr form of *ó*.¹⁴⁸ He identifies two occurrences of this in *TF*. In l. 592 *a chíanaib*, it seems likely that *ó* is intended (in spite of the lack of length mark), since the following lenition indicates that this cannot be the preposition *a*, or *a* for *i*. However, in the other instance, l. 129 *a íathaib Espáni*, there are no mutations to indicate whether this should be read as *a* or *ó*, and both make sense, so it depends on whether the MS reading is *a* or *á*. Diplom.’s reading is *á* (possibly Breatnach’s source);¹⁴⁹ however, I cannot see the length mark in the MS and it is not given in the Facs.

Base forms of prepositions beginning with *f* tended to lose this under the influence of corresponding conjugated forms with a lenited initial (see below); for example, *ri* for *fri*; *ar* for *for*.¹⁵⁰ This then resulted in confusion between *fri* and *re*, and *ar*, *for* and *íar*. There was also confusion between *fri*, *la* and *re*. In the case of *fri* (*ri*), Breatnach notes additionally that the initial consonant may be slender

¹⁴⁴ *OIGR*, p. 188.

¹⁴⁵ eDIL, s.v. *eter*, *etir*.

¹⁴⁶ *OIGR*, p. 189.

¹⁴⁷ *SnG*, p. 329. Windisch’s suggested emendation to *ar chind* or *ós chind* is therefore unnecessary (‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, p. 514, n. 3).

¹⁴⁸ *SnG*, p. 329.

¹⁴⁹ Diplom., l. 33596.

¹⁵⁰ *OIGR*, p. 190.

(*ri*) or broad (*ro* or *ra*).¹⁵¹ Examples of *ri* for *fri* in *TF* may be found at: ll. 45, 104, 221, 311, 353, 630; and in combination with the possessive pronoun at: l. 349 *rim* (poss pron 1sg); l. 342 *rit* (poss pron 2sg). There are also examples with a broad consonant: l. 349 *rom*; l. 559 *ram*.¹⁵² In these examples, l. 264 *ra*; l. 369 *ram*, it seems moreover that the preposition *la* is intended. In l. 487 *ria* seems to be intended for *fri*; however, in l. 74 *ria mbēim*, the following nasalisation suggests that the preposition *re*, *ria* was intended. Examples of *ar* for *for* in *TF* include: ll. 15, 177, 312, 391, 542, 586. In l. 392, *ar* is used for *íar*, while in l. 307, *ar* could be intended for *for* or *íar*, in the prepositional phrase *for / íar cúl* ‘behind’. In l. 271 *oc gabāil ar*, it seems more likely that *for* is intended, since *gaibid for* ‘assails, attacks’ fits better with the sense than *gaibid ar* ‘holds back, restrains’.

9.4 Forms of conjugated prepositions: Accusative forms of conjugated prepositions could replace dative forms, even where the preposition originally only took the dative.¹⁵³ Examples of this feature in *TF* include: l. 137 *ūathu* (OIr *úaidib*, prep *ó* + pron 3pl); ll. 31 and 246 *rempu* (OIr *remib*, prep *re* + pron 3pl); l. 47 *rempi* (prep *re* + pron 3pl, but here showing the results of the falling-together of unstressed vowels).

In the 3pl forms of the conjugated prepositions, acc *-(i)u* (now */-ə/*) and dat *-(a)ib* became interchangeable, and so could also be confused with the 3sg fem forms, since acc *-e* and dat *-i* also fell together as */-ə/*.¹⁵⁴ Examples of this feature in *TF* include: l. 52 *eturru*, which must be intended as prep *eter* + pron 3sg fem, since it refers to the fem sg noun *bunsach*, even though the form is 3pl. In the case of l. 610 *rempi*, it is uncertain whether this was intended for 3sg fem or 3pl, since both make sense in the context: a MidIr form of *re* + pron 3sg fem was *rempe* (OIr *remi*), while the 3pl form with acc ending was *rempu*.

In *TF* there are also examples of confusion between 3pl forms and 3sg masc forms that end in a vowel, due to the falling-together of unstressed vowels; for example: l. 87 *occu*, which seems to refer to *ní* and so must be intended for *oc* + 3sg neut (OIr *occo/occa*), even though the form is 3pl; l. 133 *impu-sin*, which must be intended for *im* + 3sg masc (OIr *imbi*), since the use of *sin* indicates that this refers back to Conchobar, even though the form is 3pl.

The 3sg masc/neut form of *re*, *ria* (OIr *riam*) only survived as an adverb in MidIr, while the 3sg fem form *remi* was used for the 3sg masc form.¹⁵⁵ Examples of this use of *remi* occur in *TF* at ll. 255 and 304.

In MidIr the conjugated forms of the preposition tended to be lenited, especially in the case of *co* and *fri*.¹⁵⁶ Examples of the lenited conjugated forms of *co* in *TF* include: l. 563 *chuci* (3sg masc); l.

¹⁵¹ *SnG*, p. 327.

¹⁵² eDIL, s.v. *fri*, notes that the form *ra* is ‘common in some LL texts’, including *TBC* and *CRR*.

¹⁵³ *OIGR*, p. 191.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 188–9.

¹⁵⁵ *SnG*, p. 330.

¹⁵⁶ *OIGR*, p. 189; Thurneysen, *Grammar of Old Irish*, §233.

418 *chucun-ni* (1pl); l. 620 *chucu* (3pl). Since lenited *f* is silent, this might then be omitted.¹⁵⁷ Examples of this in *TF* include: l. 440 *rim* (1sg); l. 255 *riss* (3sg masc); l. 624 *ria*, use of the 3sg fem form for 3sg masc (OIr *fris*); l. 502 *rib* (2pl); l. 42 *riú* (3pl).

Due to the influence of the acc 3sg fem form *inte* and 3pl *intiu*, dental endings spread to the dat 3sg fem and 3pl forms of other conjugated prepositions.¹⁵⁸ Examples of this in *TF* include: l. 11 *estib* (OIr *a* + 3pl *essib*);¹⁵⁹ l. 20 *fóthib* (OIr *fo* + 3pl *foib*).¹⁶⁰

There were also other new forms of conjugated prepositions. Examples from *TF* include: l. 215 *romaind* (OIr *re* + 1pl: *riun*); l. 473 *air*, intended as *ar* + 3sg masc, but showing influence from the confusion between *ar* and *for* (OIr *ar* + 3sg masc: dat *airiu* / acc *airi*; OIr *for* + 3sg masc: *fair*); l. 483 *foraib*, intended as *for* + 2pl, but showing confusion with the 3pl form (OIr *for* + 2pl: *foirib*; 3pl: *foraib*).

9.5 Do for di: According to eDIL, ‘the confusion between *di* and *do* in proclisis dates back to the Cambr. and Wb. glosses’.¹⁶¹ This therefore does not provide evidence for a MidIr date for *TF*; however, it occurs so frequently in this text that it is nevertheless worth noting. It is particularly common in expressions denoting belonging to a particular group (for example: l. 14 *do Chonnachtaib*; l. 132 *do śentūathaib*; l. 133 *do Ultaib*; l. 192 *do muntir*; l. 332 *dona trī coīcdaib*; l. 479 *do thegluch*); and denoting the material something is made from (for example: l. 15 *do dergór*; l. 20 *do charmoclaib*; l. 94 *do sítu*; ll. 316–17 *do chrēdumu*, *do fīnd(d)ruini*). Other examples include: l. 56 *do cech biud*; l. 192 *do gnīm*; l. 314 *don gressacht*; l. 330 *do cech aird*; l. 604 *don maig*; ll. 622–3 *do chornaib* 7 *do choppānaib*; l. 624 *do lind*.

10. Syntax and Vocabulary

10.1 Singular and plural forms: There was some variation between sg and pl forms of nouns and verbs. Usually a verb would be pl when followed by a pl subject, or sg when followed by a sg subject; however, a sg noun which has pl sense might be accompanied by pl verb, as can be seen in *TF* at l. 567 *ro díchennait a muntir*.¹⁶² Although Breatnach observes that it is very rare to find a sg verb with a pl subject, in the case of the passive, sg and pl forms fell together (since often the only distinction between their endings was lenited *t*: *-thar/-tar*); thus passive sg verb with pl subject is more common. Examples of this in *TF* include: l. 55 *do-ratad*; l. 166 *fo-certhar gala*. Breatnach further observes that, in the specific case of a relative verb following a plural antecedent, this verb may occur in the singular.¹⁶³ Examples of this feature from *TF* include: l. 279 *cā tā námaib do-thæt*; l. 332 *dona trī coīcdaib lāech do-dechaid*.

¹⁵⁷ *SnG*, p. 327.

¹⁵⁸ *OIGR*, pp. 190–1.

¹⁵⁹ *SnG*, p. 326.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 327.

¹⁶¹ eDIL, s.v. *1 de, di*.

¹⁶² *SnG*, p. 331.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 331.

10.2 Loan-words: It is worth noting that §1 of *TF* contains two Old Norse loan-words, *elta* (ll. 3 and 21) and *sadall* (l. 11). These words are only attested in texts of the MidIr period, including *TBC-LL*, ll. 4322 and 4394: *claideb co n-eltaib dét*; *MU-LL*, ll. 888–9: *sádis Cú Chulainn a chlaideb co ránic conici a elta trisin tech*; *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne*: *sadall maethla for a muin*.¹⁶⁴

Linguistic Dating: Conclusions

An overview of the evidence suggests that *TF* should be placed in the late MidIr period, the most crucial indication being the occurrence of analytic verbal forms. Other features associated with late MidIr, such as the independent pronoun *síat*, the pres 3sg ending *-enn/-ann* and the spread of the past 3pl ending *-atar/-etar* to weak verbs, also support this conclusion. Drawing in other evidence to attempt to date this version of *TF*, the production of *LL* obviously provides a *terminus ante quem*, specifically scribe U's apparent period of activity, which Duncan suggests was c. 1150–60.¹⁶⁵ Nevertheless, it seems likely that Thurneysen was correct in arguing that the *LL*-prose may date to around the middle third of the twelfth century, meaning that it was composed only shortly before the copying of this text into *LL* by scribe U.¹⁶⁶ The scribe is unlikely to have been the composer, however, (as Mac Gearailt has argued was the case for the *LL*-version of *CRR*),¹⁶⁷ given the textual errors and evidence for confusion in copying in the text; e.g. ll. 2–3 *nealtnebhtha dib*, l. 144 *erchad*, l. 248 *aradna*, l. 356 *iarsla*; and the incorporation of additional material, e.g. ll. 101–5 *bidgais ... dó*; l. 222 *nó derganle* (see the relevant textual notes).

¹⁶⁴ *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne* (ed. Jackson, ll. 945–6).

¹⁶⁵ See 'Manuscripts', p. 2.

¹⁶⁶ Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden- und Königsage*, p. 352.

¹⁶⁷ Mac Gearailt, 'Cath Ruis na Ríg', p. 147; 'Language of Some Late Middle Irish Texts', p. 192. In this case, the *LL*-scribe was scribe A. Mac Gearailt thereby disagrees with Thurneysen and de Paor's argument that the *LL*-versions of *TBC*, *CRR* and *MU* were all composed by the same author, 'Bearbeiter C' (Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden- und Königsage*, p. 364; de Paor, 'Common Authorship').

TEXT AND TRANSLATION
OF THE LL-PROSE VERSION OF *TOCHMARC FERBE*

It has been seen that, in the case of *TF*, we have a text surviving in three different versions. One editorial method applied to texts attested in multiple manuscripts is to attempt to express their relationship in a *stemma* and then collate their readings in order to reconstruct the archetype of the text: this is the Lachmannian method.¹ However, there are a number of problems associated with the application of the Lachmann method to medieval texts, which tended to exist in more fluid literary traditions.² In any case, in our specific situation, the three versions of *TF* are so different from one another as to make them impossible to collate in any meaningful way. Moreover, each individual version is arguably of equal importance for the understanding of this text and its development. Therefore, although I only provide an edition of the LL-prose version here, it should be stressed that this is not a value judgement but rather a preliminary to editing the other two versions.³

I define this as a ‘critical’ edition, in Tanselle’s usage as a contradistinction to diplomatic editing, ‘because [critical editions] are the products of the critical judgement of editors’.⁴ The language of the text is late MidIr, but I will not attempt to normalise my edition, in order to reflect the variety of the text’s linguistic forms (which in any case is arguably what characterises the MidIr period). Nevertheless, there is a certain amount of editorial intervention in the interest of clarification. Therefore, word division is at the editor’s discretion – likewise capitalisation and punctuation,⁵ where this is deemed necessary for the sense of the text, although in the main this corresponds with the scribe’s usage (the reader wishing to view only the manuscript’s capitalisation and punctuation is referred to the diplomatic edition or the online digital images of the manuscript). Paragraphs have been introduced: these are based on the sense of the narrative more than on the manuscript’s use of ornate letters (which are used varyingly). I have also divided the text into numbered sections or short chapters, which reflect narrative units, since the text is fairly long. I have not noted the expansion of common abbreviations (*a(i)r*, *ri*, *con*, *us*, lenition marks, nasal suspension marks, etc.), but all other expanded abbreviations have been italicised. Efforts have been made to give a sense of the variety of the scribe’s usage: for example, the various forms of the conjunction ‘and’ (*ocus*, 7, &) remain as they are in the manuscript, while *ae* has been distinguished from the *æ* ligature and from *e* with a subscript *a* (given as *ae*). The manuscript gives some length-marks, and I have also added length-marks where these would be

¹ For discussions of the range of editorial practice commonly found in medieval Irish studies, see McCone, ‘Prehistoric, Old and Middle Irish’, pp. 27–39; Murray, ‘Reviews, Reviewers and Critical Texts’.

² See Hollo, *Fled Bricrenn*, p. 50; Pearsall, ‘Editing Medieval Texts’, p. 101; Ó Coileáin, ‘Structure of a Literary Cycle’, p. 89.

³ For this reason, I would not class this as a ‘best-text’ edition.

⁴ Tanselle, ‘Varieties of Scholarly Editing’, p. 17. A diplomatic edition for the LL-version already exists (see p. 1); digital images can also be found online at *ISOS* (www.isos.dias.ie).

⁵ By ‘punctuation’, I refer to the use of the *punctus*, which I have given in my edited text variously as full stops, commas, semi-colons, etc. Occasions where the MS *punctus* has been omitted in the edition (where it seems incongruous) are noted.

expected (the latter represented by macrons).⁶ Lenition is given by the scribe, and so where this is lacking in the manuscript, it is supplied in square brackets. The manuscript also contains the symbols *ṅ* and *ṁ*, which appear in a number of manuscripts although their meaning is unclear, so I have retained them where they occur. I have not altered the spelling in the manuscript, except where I believe an error to have been made. Although some editors prefer to emend more intrusively, I agree with Stanley's observation that 'consistency in treating the text is an editorial virtue difficult to achieve, unless the policy is consistently not to emend: there is hardly ever a point at which an editor can say in logic rather than in expediency that he knows exactly where to stop on the slippery slope of tinkering with his text'.⁷ Letters added by the editor are given in square brackets, letters found in the manuscript but omitted by the editor are given in round brackets. Where an emendation has occurred, the manuscript reading is given in a footnote. At certain points, the text in the manuscript has become very difficult to read, having been affected by stains and/or fading. Particularly difficult to read are: the top left-hand corner of p. 253^a; the top right-hand corner and bottom right-hand corner of p. 253^b; the top and right-hand edge of p. 254^b; the top right-hand corner and bottom right-hand corner of p. 255^b. In these cases, I have supplemented my reading of the manuscript with readings from the diplomatic edition and Atkinson's facsimile, produced when the manuscript readings may have been clearer.⁸

A translation is provided alongside the edition, in order to make the text more accessible to readers. In other disciplines (and in many medieval Irish editions), an accompanying translation has not been considered necessary; however, I agree with Murray that, in Irish, 'because of the intricacies of the language, a dependable translation is a *sine qua non* of medieval Irish text editing'.⁹ For the purposes of clarity in this thesis, I have given a fairly literal translation, although where the literal translation is too far removed from natural English, this is given in a footnote. Although the historic present is used in this text, I have used the past tense in my translation throughout.

⁶ The scribe also occasionally gives hair-strokes which I have omitted.

⁷ Stanley, 'Unideal Principles of Editing', p. 269.

⁸ For a list of corrigenda to Diplom., see Appendix 1, pp. 217–19.

⁹ Murray, 'Reviews, Reviewers and Critical Texts', p. 69.

§1. [p. 253^a] ... ¹airgit òengil friu. Lénti bāngela co n-esnadaib corcraib iar[na] tóebaib impu. Scēith órbuide co mbilib argit òengil *fora* munib co feth[l]aib (7) condūalaib 7 co n-imlib find(d)ruini (7) ro-altnidib.² Claidib debennacha mōra co n-eltaib dét co n-imduiruib airgidib *fora* cressaib. Dā maelgā i lláim cech fīr díb co semmannaib argait. Baí dano torachta di ór *forloiscthi* im cech ngā díb. Nī bátar
5 assai imma cossaib nā celbair imma cennaib.

In tres buiden dano .i. in buiden i mbaī Mani fodéin: coīca ech dergdond seta sithméti inti, 7 coīca ech find n-oíderg. It é scūaplebra iarna rusiud i corcair uile .i. a scópa 7 a moīga. Sréin dēlīnecha friu, .i. bolga dergóir isind ara līniu 7 bolga airgit òengil isin líne aile. Belgi óir 7 argit friu uile. Maelchircul óir co clucīnib fo brāgit cech eich díb. Ba binnithir téta *mendchrott* oca senmaim i lláim
10 súad fogur na clucīn sin, ica foglūasacht dona echaib ina cémmennaib. Carpait fōduirn findruini co n-asnadaib óir 7 argit *eter* cech dā n-ech díb-*side*. Coīca sadall corcra co snāthib argit estib i ceīgul do chrettaib na carpat 7 co sīblaib óir estib immach, dar borddaib na carpat, co cendmīlaib īngantachaib *foraib*. Coīca gilla n-óc n-aigfīnd n-imlebur isin choīcait charput sin. & nī baí nech díb *acht mac rīg* 7 rīgna 7 curad 7 cathmīled do Chonnachtaib. *Coīca* brat corcra cortharach impu co cortharaib ecair óir 7
15 argit. Cethri ōa³ umaiddi ar⁴ *cech* brut. Mīlech do dergór fōrloiscthi in *cech* brut. Lénti srebnaidi sítai co tūagnadmannaib di ór bruthi buide i custul fria īgelchnessaib. *Coīca* cathscíath n-airgdide cona timchiull⁵ d'ór, 7 co mbreccad gemm carmocoil 7 lec lógmar cech datha, *for* muinib leo. Dā chaindill gaiscid di ślegaib cóicrinnechaib i lláim *cech* fīr díb. *Coīca* semmand d'[f]indruini 7 d'ór in *cech* gāi díb. Cīa no dlestá míach óir do *cech* fīr díb, no ícfad seim gāi *cech* fīr díb é. Torochta d'ór *forloiscthi*
20 im *cech* gāi díb. Irthōcbáil dano do charmoclaib fóthib uile conna n-ilbreccad di gemmaib lógmaraib. No lastais trá i n-aidchi *amal* ruthni grēni. *Coīca* claideb n-órduirn n-intlaisse co n-eltaib dét ecoir óir 7 argit, i trūallib fichthib finnargit *fora* cressaib dóib. *Coīca* echlasc findruini co mbaccánaib óir ina lāmaib.

¹ text is acephalous, owing to lacuna in MS

² MS *noaltnebtha dib*

³ MS *ora*

⁴ dittography error in MS – repetition of *ar*, probably caused by act of starting new line

⁵ MS ^{*tim*}*timchiull* – first *tim* written superscript above second *tim* with caret marks

§1. ... [noun] of pure-white silver to them (i.e. they had [noun] of pure-white silver). They were wearing bright-white tunics, with crimson insets (i.e. of embroidery) along the sides. Golden-yellow shields with rims of pure-white silver with scalloped ornamentation and with very razor-sharp edges of white-bronze were on their backs. Large, two-peaked swords with crossguards of ivory and with silver hilts were on their belts. Two round-headed spears with rivets of silver were in the hand of every man. Moreover there was a coil of purified gold around every spear. There were no shoes on their feet nor helmets on their heads.

The third troop moreover – that is, the troop in which Maine himself was: fifty chestnut horses, graceful and of great length and size, were in it, and fifty white horses with red ears. They all had long tails and their tails and manes were dyed crimson.¹ They had double-reined bridles, that is, balls of red-gold on one rein and balls of pure-white silver on the other rein. They all had bits of gold and of silver. There was a rounded circular disc of gold, with little bells on, under the neck of every horse. The sound of those little bells was as melodious as the strings of harps being played in the hand of a master, when they were set in motion by the horses as they stepped. Sturdy chariots of white-bronze with insertions of gold and silver were between each pair of horses. Fifty crimson caparisons, with threads of silver in them, were bound to the frames of the chariots, and with buckles of gold attached to them [the caparisons] besides, over the rims of the chariots, with wonderful animal-headed ornaments on them [the caparisons]. Fifty young, very tall lads, as fair as ice, were in those fifty chariots. And there was none of them who was not the son of a king and a queen, and of a champion and a warrior of the Connachta. They were wearing fifty crimson, fringed cloaks with fringes adorned with gold and silver. Four bronze corners were on every cloak. A brooch of purified red-gold was on every cloak. Finely textured tunics of silk, with fastenings of refined yellow gold, were next to their white bodies. Fifty silver battle-shields with gold around their circumference, and speckled with carbuncles and precious stones of every colour, were on their backs. Two gleams (?) of valour [shone] from the five-pointed spears in the hand of every man. Fifty rivets of white bronze and of gold were on every spear. Although each man should owe a bushel of gold, a rivet of the spear of each man would pay for it. A coil of purified gold was around every spear. Moreover, there was a raised ornament of carbuncles under them all [the spears], speckled with many precious gems. Indeed, they would shine at night like rays of the sun. Fifty gold-hilted swords, ornamented with inlaid work, with crossguards of ivory adorned with gold and silver, in scabbards of white silver with interlace design, were on their belts. Fifty horse-whips of white bronze with hooks of gold were in their hands.

¹ lit. 'they are all long-tailed after their staining-red in crimson, that is, their tails and their manes'

Ba cāmālaind iarum 7 ba cruthach in *maccōem* baí eturru. Is é leccan⁶fota lānsolus⁶ drechlethan.
 25 Folt fochas ōrbuide fírlebor fair co sniged co brainni a imda. Rosc n-airard n-adanta is ē gorm glainidi
 ina chind. Ba cosmail fri cléithe caille cētamain *nó* fri sīan slébi cehtar a dā gruad. Andar latt ba fross
 do nēmannuib ro-laad ina chend. Andar latt bátar dā dúal partaingi a bēoil. Ba gilithir snechta ōenaidchi
 a brági 7 a chnes chena. Secht mīlc[h]oin imma charpat i slabradaib [p. 253^b] argit, 7 ubull óir *for* cech
 30 slabraid combá leór ceól fogur na n-ubull frisna slabradaib. Noco rabi dath nā rabi isna conaib bátar
 aice. Mórfeisiur cornaire co cornaib óir 7 argit leo co n-ētaigib illdathaib impu co mongaib fin[n]buide
 foruib. Bátar trī druí rempu co mindaib airgidib ūasa cennaib co mbrattaib breccaib impu, & co
 scīathaib umaidib 7 co n-asnaidib crēdumai foruib. Trí cruittiri co n-écosc rīgda *for* cech *æ* ina comair
 i mbrattaib corcraib.

§2. Rāncatar iarum⁷ fon⁸ tachim sin co Crūachain 7 ro fersat a trí graiphni oenaig *for* faichthi na
 35 Crūachna. Celebrait iar sin do Meidb 7 do Ailill. & tīagait fon *cumma* sin i cend séta 7 imthechta *for*
 ammus Rātha Ini.

‘Is caín tíachtai[n]⁹ chetus,’ ol Bricriu. ‘Nī fētar in ba caín ticfaiti.’

‘Biaid dul dīa fiastar,’ ar Mani.

‘Ro-fitir mē,’ ar Bricriu, ‘is rūathur laí do-gēntaí. Nī anfaidi fri feiss aidchi i cūiciud Chonchobair.’

40 ‘Do-berim-se mo brēthir,’ ar Mani, ‘coro fēram feis trí laa 7 trī n-aidchi i ndūnud Geirg, na tairchem
 arís co Crūachain.’

Nī boí ní ba sīriu ic fīamuchráid ríu *acht* téit i cend séta 7 imthechta.

Iar rochtain trā do bé thastil co dūnud Geirg, ro gabad oc frithālim int slúaig and. Ro ésrat¹⁰ a
 tigi do bethi barrālaind barrglas 7 essair ūrard úrlūachra. Foídis Erb a comalta .i. Findchōem ingen Ergi
 45 ar óen ri bé tastil do fēgad int slúaig *amal* ticfaitís. Nīrbo chīan ém dī-si ón. Ō ro scāich dī mess *forru*,
 luid fri deminscél cosin ngrīanán i mboí Ferb. & ro ráid fria:

⁶ *punctus* in MS

⁷ presumably there is a suspension mark over *iar* but it is not clear: I follow the reading in Diplom., l. 33499

⁸ final *n* very faded: I follow the reading in Diplom., l. 33499

⁹ MS *tiachtai* (with hair-stroke on *i*) – Diplom. (p. 1138, n. 2) claims *n* is illegible, but from my reading I do not think it is there at all (supported by Facs.)

¹⁰ MS *esraít*: hair-stroke on *i*

The young man who was among them was indeed fair and splendid and beautiful. He was long-cheeked, very radiant and broad-faced. He had curling, golden-yellow, very long hair so that it would fall to his shoulder-blades. There were very noble, glowing eyes in his head, blue and clear as crystal. Each of his two cheeks was like the top of the forest in May or the foxglove of the mountain. You might think a shower of pearls had been placed in his mouth.² You might think his lips were two strips of red leather. His throat, and his skin besides, was as white as the snow of a single night. Seven hunting-hounds were around his chariot in chains of silver, and balls of gold were on every chain so that the sound of the balls against the chains was sufficient music. There was not a colour that was not on the hounds that he had. Seven trumpeters with horns of gold and silver, wearing many-coloured garments, with fair-yellow hair, were with them. There were three druids before them, with silver crowns on their heads, wearing patterned³ cloaks, and with bronze shields with inserts of brass on them. Three harpers in crimson cloaks, each of them with a noble appearance, were accompanying them.

§2. Then they came in that manner to Crúachain and they performed their three equine displays for an assembly on the green of Crúachain. After that, they bade farewell to Medb and Ailill, and they set out in that manner towards Ráth Ini.

‘[Your] coming looks well⁴ to begin with,’ said Bricriu. ‘I do not know whether it will look as well when you return.’⁵

‘There will be going if it may be known (i.e. I will go so that it may be known (?)),’ said Maine.

‘I know,’ said Bricriu, ‘that it is an attack only lasting a day⁶ that you would do. You would not remain for a single night’s festivities⁷ in the province of Conchobar.’

‘I give my word,’ said Maine, ‘until we may stay for a feast of three days and three nights in Gerg’s fort, we will not come back to Crúachain.’

He spent no longer speaking in riddles⁸ with them, but set out.

Then after a female messenger reached Gerg’s fort, preparation for the host was begun there. Their houses were scattered with fair-tipped, green-tipped birch and a fresh, deep litter of fresh rushes. Ferb sent her foster-sister, namely Findchóem daughter of Erg, together with a female messenger to observe the host as they came. Indeed, Findchóem did not take long.⁹ When she had finished her appraisal of them, she went with definite news to the bower where Ferb was. And she said to her:

² lit. ‘head’, i.e. a description of his teeth

³ lit. ‘speckled’

⁴ lit. ‘is fair’

⁵ lit. ‘whether it will be fair that you will return’

⁶ lit. ‘the attack of a day’

⁷ lit. ‘the feast of a night’

⁸ lit. ‘at ambiguous speaking’

⁹ lit. ‘that was not long for her’

‘At-chiu-sa,’ ar sī, ‘dírim don dún-sa, 7 ō ro gab Conchobar Emuin noco tānic rempi 7 noco ticfa co
bruinne mbrātha dīrim is áilliu nó is chōemiu nó is ilchlessachu andás in dīrim do-cechaing in mag
innossa. Is samail lim 7 bad i n-aballgort chumrai no beind lasin mbalad tānic dia n-étaigib ar ndochum
50 ĩarna foglūasacht don maethgaíth do-ic tairsiu. Cech cless 7 cech abairt do-gní int óclách fil eturru noco
n-facca-sa rīam a leithéit. Fo-cheirt a bunsaiḡ rōt n-urchair ūad, fo-cheḡgat a choin inna diaid, co tecat
a choin eturru 7 lár, 7 int óclach eturru 7 firmimint, connā ric lár conas gabat eturru fon cumma sin.’

La sodain trā tecait slúaig dūnaid Geirg coro múchait sé fir déc dīb ica féḡad. Tairliḡḡit i ndorus
in dúne ĩar sin, 7 tairniter a carpait 7 scoirtir a ḡnrega. & tecait innund isin dúnud, 7 ferthair fīrchaīn
55 fáilti friu, & do-gnīther grīthgretha do glanfōthrucud dóib. Do-ratad ĩar sin isin lāechthech mór boí ar
comair drechi in dūnaid. Dos-rochtatar fo chētóir airigthi airerda ...¹¹ do cech biud sainemail boí for
druimleirg in talman.¹²

§3. In tan trā ba hāne dóib bith ic tochathium a [flede],¹³ do-dechaid sidi gaíthi géri galbigi coro
chroth¹⁴ dindḡna in dūnaid uli, 7 coro chrithnaig in tech¹⁵ [p. 254^a] clāraid i mbaí in slúag co torchratar
60 a scéith dia ndelḡnaib 7 a slega dia n-adlennaib, 7 coro sétea a mmíasa ūadib amal dulli darbri.
Machtnaigít ind óic de-sein, & ro ĩarfaig Gerg do druī Mani cid ro imfulaing in gēth sin. Is and sin ro
recair Ollgāeth druī Mani:

‘Indar lind ém,’ ar sē, ‘ní fó sén i tāncas din tochmarc-sa innocht. Da-bar-ró Conchobar; da-foichlid co
mbrisfea cath for Meidb isin matain-sea i mbárach, ĩar far ndíth uili, in lín i tāid is’ tig.’

65 & do-rīḡḡni in glónáthi airchetail seo ĩar sin:

I.

1. Deilm in gēth, grānni in grīth,

bith ro bed[g];¹⁶

derb in rád: raīnfid in¹⁷ fer,

sleg tri Gerg.

¹¹ the final *a* of *airerda* is unclear, then there seems to be a space followed by an illegible short word (3–5 letters?)

¹² *-alm-* is unclear, then possibly followed by *a* with a suspension mark but it is very faded and the ruling of the margin makes the last letters unclear. Although Facs. gives ‘*talmain*’, the correct gen sg form would be non-palatal (as given in Diplom., l. 33528), so I follow this reading.

¹³ the word after *tochathium* *a* is now illegible in a stain – *flede* is a suggestion by Windisch which I adopt here (‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, l. 88)

¹⁴ *-ro chroth* is now illegible in a stain: I follow the reading in Diplom., l. 33530

¹⁵ *in tech* is now illegible in a stain: I follow the reading in Diplom., l. 33531

¹⁶ MS *bedb*

¹⁷ *in* either erased or faded in MS

‘I see,’ she said, ‘a host coming to this fort, and since Conchobar has ruled Emain, there has not come before and there will not come until the Day of Judgement a host that is more splendid or fairer or of more feats than the host that has come across the plain now. It seemed to me as if I was in a scented apple-orchard because of the fragrance which came towards us from their garments after they had been stirred by the gentle wind which came across them. I have not before seen the equal of each feat and each trick which the young warrior who was among them performed. He throws his staff the distance of a cast away from him, his hounds proceed after it, so that his hounds come between it and the ground, and the warrior between it and the sky, so that it does not reach the ground and they catch it between them in that manner.’

Thereupon the crowds of Gerg’s fort came so that sixteen men were suffocated in beholding them [Maine’s troops]. They alighted in the doorway of the fort after that, and their chariots were set down and their horses were unyoked. And they came inside into the fort, and a very fine welcome was given to them, and bubbling (?) baths for thorough washing were made for them. After that they were brought into the great hall of the warriors which was in front of the fort. Immediately pleasant ... portions came to them of every excellent food that was on the surface of the earth.

§3. However, while they were enjoying consuming their feast, the blast of a keen, fierce wind arose and it shook the mound under¹⁰ the whole fort, and the wooden house, in which the host was, trembled so that their shields fell from their hooks and their spears from their racks, and so that their tables were blown away from them like the leaves of an oak. The young men were amazed because of that, and Gerg asked Maine’s druid what had caused that wind. Then Maine’s druid Ollgáeth answered: ‘Indeed,’ he said, ‘it seems to me¹¹ that the omen is not good, with which we came¹² for this wooing tonight. Conchobar will come upon you; take heed¹³ that he will defeat Medb in battle tomorrow morning, after your total destruction, the number that you are in the house.’ And thereupon he made this poetical composition:¹⁴

I.

1. The din of the wind, terrible the uproar,
 the world was afraid;
 certain the speech: the man will be victorious,
 a spear through Gerg.

¹⁰ lit. ‘of’

¹¹ lit. ‘to us’

¹² lit. ‘there was a coming’

¹³ lit. ‘take heed of it, i.e. that he will defeat’

¹⁴ possibly including the concept of ‘outline-poem’; see ‘Textual Notes’, p. 110

70 2. Urchur arad tri reing rí,
gním co neim;
snigfid fuil formna fer,
sleg fri sleig.

3. Gēsfid scíath ria mbēim bailc
75 a glaic gil;
beti cuirp i cossair chairn,
bat mairb fir.

4. Bās meic rí do lágin rí –
bid gním gér –
80 ulach ard ma chorp crūaid,
trúag in scél.

5. Brisfid Badb; bid bríg borb,
tolg for Meidb,
ilar écht, ár for slúag,
85 trúag in deilm. Deilm.

‘Dīa mbad fóm-sa trá cách,’ ol in druí, ‘no fáicfithea in dūnad-sa innocht.’

Ro cairiged-som ó Mani co garb aire sin. Is *ed* ro ráid Gerg, ní baí ní ara fubthaitis occu, ar nī rabatar curaid *nó* cathmīlid Ulad ar óen ri Conchobar.

‘Cenco beth sib-si *etir* sund,’ ar sē, ‘do-béraind-sea 7 mo dā *mac* cath do Chonchobur.’

90 Ra tócbait a n-airm leo iar sin, 7 nī thartsat dia n-airi a n-ebairt in druí.

§4. Dīa mbaí dano Conchobar i tosuch ind laí sin ina c[h]otlud i nEmain 7 a rígan ’na farrad .i. Mugain Etanchaithrech ingen Echach Feidlig, co n-acca in mnaí cōem ina dochum ina imdai.¹⁸ Ēcosc rīgnaide lé. Moing casdrumnech barrbuide i cūacris imma cend. Sretha sítai fria gelchnes. Bréit bláthmīn máeth do sítu ūanidi imma brāgit. Dā maelassa findruine etera bonnu bláthmīni 7 talmāin.

¹⁸ MS *imdai*: hair-stroke on *i*

2. The cast of a servant through the loins of a king,
 a poisonous deed;
 blood will flow from the shoulders of men,¹⁵
 spear against spear.

3. A shield will groan before a powerful blow
 by a white hand;
 corpses will be in the bed of a cairn,
 men will die.¹⁶

4. The death of a king's son by a king's spear –
 it will be a bitter deed –
 a loud cry of lamentation around a hardened (i.e. in death) corpse,
 sorrowful the tidings.

5. The Badb will destroy; there will be violent strength,
 an attack on Medb,
 an abundance of slaughter, destruction on a host,
 sorrowful the din.

‘So, if you were all to follow my advice,’¹⁷ said the druid, ‘you would leave this fort tonight.’ He was rebuked harshly by Maine because of that. This is what Gerg said, that there was no reason why they should be alarmed at it, for Conchobar did not have any champions or warriors of the Ulaid with him.

‘Even if you were not here,’ he said, ‘I and my two sons would give battle to Conchobar.’ Then their weapons were raised by them, and they did not heed what the druid said.

§4. Now, at dawn of that day, when Conchobar was sleeping in Emain, with his wife beside him, namely Mugain Etanchaithrech (‘of the Furzy Hair’) daughter of Eochaid Feidlech, he saw a¹⁸ beautiful woman coming towards him [as he lay] in his bed. She had a queenly appearance. She had curly, wavy, yellow hair [tied up] in a hair-band around her head. Borders of silk were next to her fair skin. There was a soft, smooth scarf of green silk around her neck. There were two round-toed sandals of white bronze between her soft feet and the ground.

¹⁵ lit. ‘blood of the shoulders of men will flow’

¹⁶ lit. ‘be dead’

¹⁷ lit. ‘subject to me’

¹⁸ lit. ‘the’, i.e. the woman now described

- 95 ‘Tó, *cech* maith duit, a Chonchobair.’
‘Cid fil dúinn de-*side*?’ ar Conchobar.
‘Secht mbliadna ó ’nocht,’ ar sī, ‘do-gēntar Táin Bó Cūalngi, 7 airgfitir Ulaid 7 bērthair in Dond Cūalngi; & mac ind fīr do-gēna sin .i. Mani Mórgor mac Ailella 7 Medba, do-dechaid do féis la hEirb ingin nGeirg do Glind Ge[i]rg. Trī choīcait a lín. Ērig-siu,’ ar sī, ‘trī coīcait Fomōrach cucu 7 bid latt
100 coscur.’
¹⁹Bidgais Conchobar iar sin 7 dúscis a rīgain, 7 ad-fét dī a aislingi.
‘Is lór ém,’ ar Mugain, ‘fil chena etrund 7 Connachta.’
‘Is demin ém,’ ar sē, ‘cid ’nar tost bem-ni, do-gēntar in táin út.’
‘Déni a chomairli ri Cathbad,’ ar Mugain, ‘7 in chomairli do-bēra duit, corop hí do-gnēis.’
105 Rádid Conchobar iar sin fri Cathbad, ara ndernad fāstini dó.¹⁹ & do-rīngni rand tosaig laíde iar sin 7 ro fīreair Cathbad hé:

II.

- CONCHOBAR: 1. Finna latt, a Chathbaid chaīn,
cā būadred fil im *men*main,
cā hurbaid mór ar-nom-thá,
110 a Chathbuid, a druí Emna.
- CATHBAD: 2. A Chonchobair na curad,
a rí urdnide Ulad!
Do-fáetsat mór curad de:
bid hé airdi d’asslinge.
- 115 CONCHOBAR: 3. Innis *cech* olc ticfa de,
déni fīr na fāstine.
Na habbair tria bāegul bréic,
ar nī fīl druí do lethéit.
- CATHBAD: 4. Do-fáeth Mani – [mó] *cech* ail –
120 mac Medba don Chrūachanmaig,

^{19–19} As noted in Diplom.: ‘...*gais* to *dó* written on an erased surface, in smaller script, in three longer lines, projecting into inner and outer margins’ (p. 1140, n. 2)

‘Indeed, every good thing to you, o Conchobar,’ [she said].

‘What does that mean for us?’ said Conchobar.

‘Seven years from tonight,’ she said, ‘the Cattle-Raid of Cúailnge will be carried out, and the Ulaid will be slain and the Brown Bull of Cúailnge will be carried off; and the son of the man who will do that, namely Maine Mórgor (‘the Very Dutiful’), son of Ailill and Medb, has come to Glenn Geirg to a marriage-feast with Ferb daughter of Gerg. Their number is one hundred and fifty. Go,’ she said, ‘with one hundred and fifty Fomorians to meet them and victory will be with you.’

Then Conchobar jumped up and he woke his queen, and he told her his vision.

‘But,’ said Mugain, ‘there is already enough [conflict] between us and the Connachta.’

‘But it is certain,’ he said, ‘if we do nothing,¹⁹ the cattle-raid of which she spoke will be carried out.’

‘Discuss it²⁰ with Cathbad,’ said Mugain, ‘and the counsel that he gives to you, let it be that which you do.’

Then Conchobar told Cathbad that he should make a prophecy for him. And then he composed the first stanza of a poem and Cathbad answered him:

II.

CONCHOBAR: 1. Find out, o fair Cathbad,
what disturbance is in my mind,
what great destruction is in store for me,
o Cathbad, o druid of Emain.

CATHBAD: 2. O Conchobar of the heroes,
o eminent king of the Ulaid!
Many heroes will fall because of it:
that will be the portent of your vision.

CONCHOBAR: 3. Tell every evil which will come from it,
reveal the truth of the prophecy.
Do not speak a lie because of its danger (i.e. out of fear of its danger),
for there is not a druid who is your equal.

CATHBAD: 4. Maine will fall – beyond²¹ every reproach –
the son of Medb from the plain of Crúachain,

¹⁹ lit. ‘if it is in our silence / at rest that we are’

²⁰ lit. ‘take its counsel’

²¹ lit. ‘greater than’

is do-fáetsat ri gním ñguil
trī choīcait dia chomaltaib.

5. Na slúaig út ón Chrūachain chaiss,
nī thecat ūait dara n-ais,²⁰
125 ar is móti da blad trá;
foichle, fethim is finna. F.

‘Do-roichi-siu imslán, a rí,’ ar sē, ‘co mbūaid 7 coscur²¹ [p. 254^b] 7 commaīdim.’²²

§5. Is and sin do-roacht Cathach Catutchend²³ ingen Dímóir co Emain. Bangaiscedach²⁴ amra ī-
side. A ĩathaib Espáni tánic ar šeirc Con Culainn co Emain. Do-chuaid issin sochraite sin ar ðen ri
130 Conchobar. Do-riachtatar dano trīar amra a finib Fomórach and, fo blad barbardachta [ī]ad²⁵ .i.
Sīabarchend mac Sūlremair, & Berngal Brec, 7 Būri Borbbrīathrach. Do-rocht dano and Fácen mac
Dubloñgsig do sentūathaib Ulad, & Fabric Fīacail Nemi asind Asia Móir, & Forais Fingalach a
Manaind. Luid ĩarum Conchobar trī choīcait lāech impu-sin 7 nī ruc nech do Ultaib leis²⁶ acht sé féin 7
a ara .i. Brod 7 Imrind in druí .i. mac Cathbath. Nī baí dano gilla oc neoch díb²⁷ acht gilla Conchobair,
135 acht a scéith fora munib leo 7 a llāigne lethanglassa ina llámaib²⁸ 7 a claidib tromma tortbullecha fora
cressaib. Nība lín trā ba mesta forru: ba²⁹ mór a toile menman.

Ō ro-siachtatar ĩarum co mbātar ic fēgad in dúnaid ūathu innund, at-chonncatar tromnēl dímór
ūas chind in dúnaid. Cirdub ind ara cend dō 7 dergg a medón 7 glass in cend aile. ĩarfaigis Conchobar
ĩar sin:

140 ‘Cid co³⁰ tirc[h]an,³¹ a Imrind,’ ar sē, ‘in nél út at-chiam ūasin dūnud?’
‘Tirchanaid ém,’ ar Imrind, ‘ág 7 urbaid na haidchi innocht.’
& do-ringni in rethoric-seo ĩar sin:

²⁰ *an* written above line with caret marks

²¹ *punctus* in MS

²² *comm-* is faded: I follow the reading in Diplom., l. 33594

²³ *d* is faded: I follow the reading in Diplom., l. 33595

²⁴ *i* is faded: I follow the reading in Diplom., l. 33596

²⁵ there has been an erasure before *ad* (1–2 letters) – Windisch suggests supplying *i* or *si* (*Tochmarc Ferbe*, p. 474, n. 2)

²⁶ *punctus* in MS

²⁷ *punctus* in MS

²⁸ *punctus* in MS

²⁹ MS *bá*: hair-stroke in *a*

³⁰ MS *o*; cf. eDIL, s.v. 3 *co*: ‘*co n-* freq. abbreviated *o* in earlier lang. even where nasalizing *n* would not normally appear’

³¹ MS *tircran*

and one hundred and fifty of his companions
will fall on account of the deed of weeping.

5. Those hosts from thick-wooded Crúachain,
they will not escape from you,
for then your renown is the greater;
take heed, keep watch and learn.

‘You will return unscathed, o king,’ he said, ‘with victory and triumph and exultation.’

§5. At that time Cathach Catutchend (‘the Hard-Headed’) daughter of Dímór had come to Emain. She was a famous female-champion. She had come to Emain from the lands of Spain because of love for Cú Chulainn. She went into that army alongside Conchobar. Moreover three famous men from the races of the Fomorians came there – they were renowned for violence – namely Síabarchend son of Súlremar and Berngal Brecc (‘the Freckled’) and Búri Borbbríathrach (‘of the Violent Speech’). Moreover there came Fácen son of Dubloingsech from the *Sentúatha Ulad*, and Fabric Fíacail Neime (‘of the Poison-Tooth’) from Asia Minor, and Forais Fingalach (‘the Kinslayer’) from the Isle of Man. Then Conchobar left, with one hundred and fifty warriors around him, and he did not take any of the Ulaid with him except he himself and his attendant, namely Brod, and Imrind the druid, namely the son of Cathbad. Also none of them had a servant except the servant of Conchobar, but [they themselves carried] their shields on their backs and their broad-headed, grey spears in their hands and their heavy, hard-striking swords on their belts. However, they were not to be judged by their number: the strength of their courage was great.

Then when they came to where they could see the fort in front of them,²² they saw a huge, heavy cloud above the fort. One end of it was jet-black and its middle was red and the other end was blue-grey. Then Conchobar asked:

‘What, o Imrind,’ he said, ‘does the cloud yonder, which we see over the fort, foretell?’

‘Indeed,’ said Imrind, ‘it foretells battle and destruction tonight.’

And then he composed this *retoiric*:

²² lit. ‘so that they were looking at the fort from them yonder’

III.

Dub nél nemi,

glass erch[ó]d³² imfæbor,

145 derg³³ crūa credbaigthi,

fo bíth tescfaiter taíb,

lēonfaitir lāma,

cirrfitir colla,³⁴

maelfaitir munéoil

150 i ndūnad Geirg

ō thrāth nóna nīthaige

co medón laí:

lechtlige di lār,

óc dālfid écdubi.

D.

155 Cechaing Conchobar iar sin ar ammus in dūnaid. Is and sin *dano* ro sudiged dabach umai thall is' taig, diarba chomainm Ōl Gūalai³⁵ iar sin, & ro bās oca línad dond fín. Do-rochair³⁶ *dano* a escra féig finnargait a lláim in dāleman isin dabaig coro dóirt a t[h]rí tonna dar borddaib dī. Is and ro ráid Ollgáeth in druí:

IV.

'All amae,' ol in druí,

160 'brod in airi[dig]!³⁷

Nī ba cían la hallmuri bías,

ar fo-crēchtnaigfiter slūaig,

air-dībdibther lāechrad,

do-brisfiter tige.

165 Fo-gēba Emain dīt[in],³⁸

ar fo-certhar gala ōenfer

eter laí 7 aidche,

eter slóg Geirg 7 Conchobair

isin tegdais-[s]e innocht.

170 Ní fó mac ruc māthair

isin taig-sea innocht.

³² MS *erchad*, followed by *punctus* in MS

³³ *punctus* in MS

³⁴ *o* is faded: I follow the reading in Diplom., l. 33615

³⁵ *punctus* in MS

³⁶ *r-* is faded and lenition mark mostly obscured by smudge: I follow the reading in Diplom., l. 33620

³⁷ MS *airigid*

³⁸ MS *ditui*

III.

Black [represents] a cloud of poison,
blue-grey [represents] destruction of a double-edged blade,
red [represents] coagulated blood,
because sides will be cut,
hands will be wounded,
bodies will be maimed,
necks will be severed
in Gerg's fort
from the warlike mid-afternoon
until the middle of the day:
corpses from [our] midst,
a young man will bestow the darkness of death.

Then Conchobar proceeded towards the fort. Now at that time a vat of brass was set there in the house, the additional name of which was *Ól nGúala* in later times,²³ and it was being filled with wine. Then the²⁴ glowing vessel of white silver fell from the hand of the cupbearer into the vat so that it [the vessel] poured out its three waves over the sides of it [the vat]. Then Ollgáeth the druid said:

IV.

‘Woe indeed,’ said the druid,
‘brod in airidig!’
It will not be long [until] it will be among foreigners,
for hosts will be wounded,
warriors will be destroyed,
houses will be broken up.
Emain will find a defence,
for feats of valour of individual men will be performed
both day and night,
between the hosts of Gerg and Conchobar
in this house tonight.
He is not lucky, the son whom a mother bore,
who is in this house tonight.

²³ lit. ‘after that’

²⁴ lit. ‘his’, i.e. the cupbearer’s

§6. Do-roich Conchobar in dorus 7 gárit na hallmaraig gáir airgni iar sin amal ba bás dóib immon dūnad. Ērgid Gerg iar sin 7 érgit a dā mac .i. Cond Coscarach³⁹ 7 Cobthach Cnesgel,⁴⁰ 7 gabait a n-armu. & rádis Gerg fri Mani:

175 ‘Lēic-siu etruind féin innar n-Ultaib, co fessara cīa úain bas chalmiu. Bidbaid duit-siu sind uile; is fó duit ar comthuttim ar óen. Mad sinni do-thæth and, geib-siu it chind dīa féta.’

Téit Gerg immach iar sin 7 a dā mac cona muntir léo. & foroprait ar gabáil in dúnaid⁴¹ 7 ar chathugud fri Conchobar immach, 7 ní lēcat nech *forro* indund fri ré cían. Fecht n-ōen trá, téit Gerg darin dorus immach fri cnes urgaille 7 forfobair *fora* thaffond ind loích ōn dúnud immach. & ros⁴² geib
180 sroigled 7 essorcon do cech aí 7 do cech airchind⁴³ immon dúnud. 7 do-fuittet cūiciur Fomōrach laiss [p. 255^a] don rūathur sin, 7 do-fuit leiss in druí .i. Imrind mac Cathbad, 7 benaid a chend de 7 berid leis in cend innund ar ammus in dorus. Is and sin do-dechaid Cathach Catutchend eturru 7 in dorus, 7 dorat comrac féig fīchda dó-som. Ar aí sin co⁴⁴ topacht Gerg in cend dī-si, 7 berid leiss innund issin tech [i m]boí Mani, iarna chrēchtugud co mmór, & fo-ceird na cinnu úad i fiadnaisi Mani. 7 suidis ‘na
185 imdai⁴⁵ iar sin 7 at-aig a osnaid ass⁴⁶ 7 con-attacht dig.

Ro-saig Conchobar and-side cona muntir co mbātar fri cnes int sonnaig. & tócfait a scīathu úasa cennaib ina lámaib cléi 7 sraccait in sonnach cucu immach dia lámaib desaib 7 ceṅgait co mbātar *for* lár in dúni⁴⁷ 7 ba ōendorus dóib and-side iar mbrisiud in daṅgin. Is and sin do-llēici Brod⁴⁸.i. gilla Conchobair⁴⁸ ūad ind ara sleig boí ina láim innond is’ tech conos tarla triasin scíath boí *for* inchaib ind
190 ríG Geirg 7 conos tarla tria ēslind a chuirp corbo chross tall tarsna triana chláb iar tregdad a chride; 7 co ndechaid tria Airidech .i. gilla Geirg, co torcratar a ndís cen anmain. Imma-saí Conchobar iar sin fo⁴⁹ slúag Geirg sechnón in dúnaid co⁵⁰ torchair trīcha láech leis do muntir Geirg do gním a lámi féin a ōenur, cenmothá ina torchair ria muntir. Do-rochratar dano sochaide dia muntir-seom leo-som.

³⁹ *punctus* in MS

⁴⁰ As noted in Diplom.: ‘erasure after *cnes*; *gel* in marg., with caret marks’ (p. 1142, n. 1)

⁴¹ *punctus* in MS

⁴² *r* faded: I follow the reading in Diplom., l. 33638

⁴³ *d* is very faint: I follow the reading in Diplom., l. 33639

⁴⁴ MS *o*; cf. n. 30

⁴⁵ MS *imdai*: hair-stroke on *i*

⁴⁶ *punctus* in MS

⁴⁷ *punctus* in MS

⁴⁸⁻⁴⁸ written above line

⁴⁹ Diplom. states: ‘*fon* MS., with *n* expunged’ (p. 1142, n. 2), i.e. with a *punctum delens* over it. I follow this reading (although there are other examples of *n* in this text which are not interpreted as a *punctum delens*), since later in the text *r* is found, where this is likely to be a *punctum delens* (see n. 63).

⁵⁰ MS *o*; cf. n. 30

§6. Conchobar came to the door and then the foreigners shouted a cry of attack around the fort, as was their custom. Then Gerg rose and his two sons, namely Conn Coscarach ('the Victorious') and Cobthach Cnesgel ('the Fair-skinned') rose, and they seized their weapons. And Gerg said to Maine: 'Leave us Ulstermen [to settle it] among ourselves, so that you may discover which of us may be more valiant. We are all your enemies; our falling as one at each other's hands is good for you. If it is us who die there, hold out as leader if you are able.'

Then Gerg and his two sons went out, with their followers with them. And they began to defend the fort and to fight against Conchobar outside, and for a long time they did not let anyone inside past them. Then on one occasion, Gerg went out through the door to meet the front edge of the battle-line, and he set about chasing the warrior [Conchobar] away from the fort, and he began²⁵ striking and beating at each one of them and on every side around the fort. And five Fomorians fell by his hand in that attack, and the druid, namely Imrind son of Cathbad, fell by his hand, and he struck off his head from him and carried the head with him over towards the door. Then Cathach Catutchend came between him and the door, and she engaged him in fierce, furious combat. In spite of that, Gerg struck off her head, and he, having been greatly wounded, carried [it] with him into the house where Maine was, and he threw the heads [Imrind's and Cathach's] down in front of Maine. And then he sat down on his couch and gave a groan and asked for a drink.

Conchobar arrived there with his followers until they were at the edge of the palisade. And they raised their shields above their heads in their left hands and they tore down²⁶ the palisade towards them with their right hands, and they proceeded until they were in the middle of the fort and there was a single door [remaining] for them [to deal with] there after the fence had been broken. Then Brod, namely Conchobar's servant, hurled one of the two spears which were in his hand over into the house so that it went through the shield which was in front of Gerg the king and it went through a vulnerable part of his body so that, after his heart had been pierced, there was a cross there across through his breast (i.e. it went through his heart so that the spear and his body made a cross-shape); and so that it went through Airidech, namely Gerg's servant, and the pair of them fell lifeless. Then Conchobar turned upon Gerg's host throughout the fort and thirty warriors of Gerg's household fell solely by the deed of his own hand, in addition to those who fell at the hands of his followers. A multitude of that [Conchobar's] household fell by their hands as well.

²⁵ lit. 'he began it, i.e. striking and beating'

²⁶ lit. 'pulled out'

§7. Is and trá at-raacht Nuagel ingen Ergi .i. ben Geirg 7 do-rat a trí foídi ferggacha guil esti, & ro
195 gab cend a fir ina hucht.

‘Dar brēthir ém,’ ar sī, ‘is mór in gním gillai do-ríngni Brod .i. Gerg do marbad ina thig féin. Is sochaide
trá,’ ar sī, ‘bias icot chaíniud. 7 cīaro thuttis im chaingin t’ingini, mór n-ingen i rraba féin chardes.’
7 do-rat a thesta *for* aird, 7 do-ringni rand tosaig laíde:

V.

1. Iss é Gerg so ina ligi;
200 is tria chin a ingini,
is triana cin atá sund,
in tarbech sínte [i] comlund.

2. Mór in comlund ro gab Gerg,
ócléach find fæborderg,
205 fer fíal fomórda ferda,
aircech álaind ardergna.

3. Cā lāech rop ferr innā Gerg?
Cā fróech na figed fri feirg?
Cā slúag na caínfed do bás,
210 na scaílfea dot éis, cen tlás?⁵¹

4. Sáeth lim th’fēgad it lige,
a Geirg ālaind foltbuide.
A chara na cūan in cech than,
is trúag lim-sa do marbad.

215 5. Romaind duit i nGlind Ge[i]rg,
ic Loch Áne is ic Irard,
is icna hūarānaib-se thess;
mór mban fo-úarais cardes.

⁵¹ MS *cen tlás na scaílfea dot éis* – rearranged for purposes of rhyme; see ‘Textual Notes to the Verse’, pp. 134–5

§7. Then Nuagel daughter of Erg, namely the wife of Gerg, arose and she let out her three angry cries of lamenting, and she took the head of her husband into her lap.

‘Truly,’²⁷ she said, ‘great was the servant’s deed which Brod performed, namely to kill Gerg in his own house. Moreover,’ she said, ‘many will lament you. And although you died on account of your daughter, there were many women in whose friendship you were (i.e. who loved you).’

And she uttered his praise out loud, and she performed the first stanza of a poem:

V.

1. This is Gerg lying here;

it is through the fault of his daughter,

it is through her fault that he is here,

the strong man laid low in battle.

2. Great was the battle which Gerg undertook,

a fair, red-bladed warrior,

a noble, giant, virile man,

resourceful, handsome, very famous.

3. Who is the warrior who is better than Gerg?

What is the rage that would not boil with anger?

Where is the host that would not lament your death,

that will not scatter after your death, without weakness?

4. It grieves me to behold you lying there,

o handsome, yellow-haired Gerg.

O friend of the warbands at all times,

I am wretched because you have been killed.

5. You were before us in Glenn Geirg,

by Lake Áne and by Irard,

and by these springs in the south;

many the women whose friendship you obtained.

²⁷ lit. ‘by an oath indeed’

220 6. Robat cara do *cech* cléir,
no bíd cách icot ógréir,
ba maith ri cách do gráibri,
is derb ropat degairle.⁵²

225 7. Rop[s]at móra do *berta*,
ropat ségaind airechta,
ropat rí rurech co rrath,
ropat fuilech i fírchath.

230 8. Ropo mór do thech – ro fess –
cīa do-rīngned and t’amles;
is and rot gāet i nn-inud rīg;
cīa do-rīngned, rop anfír.

9. Rot gāet Brod is níro dlig,
cor gab triut i n-Airidig:
tú féin is do gilla thair
i nn-ōenfēcht da-rochrabair.

235 10. Mór [in] gním gillai can gess,
do-rīngni Brod, rop amles:
marbad rīg rin-ne ré ré;
ro marb sé sinni 7 sé. Is é.

240 §8. Fo-ropairset *dano* dá mac Geirg béus .i. Cobthach Cnesgel 7 Cond Coscarach ar gabáil in
dúnaid 7 níro scandir [p. 255^b] cen échta dóib. Níro dāmair in mórbríg do Mani bith ina thost cen techt
féin do dīgail a chlēmna *for*⁵³ Ultaib. & at-raacht īar sin 7 ro gab a scíath mór míleta fair 7 a dā šleig
slemungéra uillendcha móra ina láim, & a chlaideb trom tortbuillech crúadgér comramach *fora* chriss.
7 at-raactatar a thrí coīcait i n-ōenfēcht fris. Nīrbo irusa a frīthālim: ba mór in toilg *menman* 7 aicnid 7
in tinsaitin úalli ro boí i cridi⁵⁴ *cech* óen dīb sin. Ro boí *dano* sant mór 7 dūthracht calmai do dēnam
245 occu.

⁵² in MS *nó derganle* written above line

⁵³ suspension mark over *f* is very faint: I follow the reading in Diplom., l. 33709

⁵⁴ As noted in Diplom.: ‘letter erased after final *i*’ (p. 1144, n. 3)

6. You were a friend to every warband,
everyone used to obey you completely,²⁸
everyone liked your pleasant word,
it is certain that you were a good counsellor.²⁹

7. Your exploits were great,
you were a champion of an assembly,
you were a provincial king with prosperity,
you were valiant in just battle.

8. Your house was great – it was known –
even though you were harmed there;
it is there that he killed you in the home of a king;
even though it has been done, it was not just.

9. Brod killed you and he was not entitled to,
and through you he attacked Airidech:
you yourself and your servant yonder,
you fell at the same time.

10. Great was the servant's deed – without compulsion –
which Brod has done, it was a misfortune:
slaying a king in front of us before his time;
he has killed us and him.

§8. Then Gerg's two sons, namely Cobthach Cnesgel and Conn Coscarach, nevertheless set about taking back the fort and it [the fort] did not break asunder without deeds of valour by them. His great strength did not allow Maine to be inactive³⁰ without going himself to take vengeance on the Ulaid for his father-in-law. And then he arose and he took his great warlike shield onto his arm³¹ and his two great, polished, sharp, angular spears into his hand, and his powerful, hard, sharp, victorious sword of heavy blows onto his belt. And his one hundred and fifty men arose at the same time as him. It was not easy to withstand him: it was mighty, the strength of mind and of spirit and the flowing of pride which was in the heart of every one of those men. Moreover, they had a great eagerness and desire to perform deeds of valour.

²⁸ lit. 'everyone would be at your complete will'

²⁹ above the line in the MS: 'or a red warrior'

³⁰ lit. 'silent'

³¹ lit. 'onto him'

Ba⁵⁵ ségda súaire sobēsach in rígmacc boí rempu, 7 cīarbo maccōem īar n-áis, ropo mílid īar mórghasciud. Ba hālgēn curmthigi, is ba dūr debtha, 7 ba nathir nemi, ba⁵⁶ *cumnech* écrafti, ba oíbel ága, ba⁵⁷ comnart comērgi, ba logthanach sét, ba hanaccarthach imgona, ba tene ā[nrad]a,⁵⁸ ba⁵⁹ nertlīa fergi, ba tond brātha ar buirbe, ba⁶⁰ íaru ar athlaimi, ba dair ar daiṅni, ba hé rind ága 7 imgona na Teora
 250 Connacht, 7 ba hé a cendmíl airechta 7 a lám thairberta sét 7 a sodomna rí. Nīrbo mīad leis nech isin domun do thīachtain fo chomlín do gabāil tige fair.

Ro thaffniset īarum īar sin na Fomórchu ōn tig immach. Nīrbo lám lēga la Mani in n-ūair sin, & do-rochratar nōnbur Fomōrach dia chét(s)cundscli a ōenur. Is and sin do-riacht dībergach na hAsia Móri .i. Fabric Fīacail Nemi fri cnes na debtha. & ro gab sroigled 7 essorcoin 7 brúd 7 básugud int slúaiḡ
 255 remi, 7 nī ragbad riss co rrocht cosin magin i mbaí Mani, co tard cechtar n-aí díb scíath fri scíath dia chēli, 7 bátar isin chomlund co ndechaid dar medōn aidchi. 7 do-rat Fabric trī gona aidbli *for* Mani, 7 ro dīchēnd Mani ē-sium īar scís chomluind. Cid Conchobar dano ba⁶¹ gal churad leis ar do-rochratar trīcha lēch lánchalma leis do muntir Geirg imma *mac* .i. im Chond Coscarach. Ro immir trá in slúag cechtarda immforrān *fora* cēle. Is bec nāro chomraicset mēra a coss⁶² icond imthūarcain. Ro siacht fuil
 260 glúni fer sechnón in dūnaid. At-chlos fon trīchu chét ba nesom dóib blo[g]bēmnech na scíath 7 na bocōte, 7 scemgal⁶³ inna lāigne lethanglas 7 na claideb crúadgér⁶⁴ i comrac, 7 briscbrúar na clocend ica n-erlech, 7 búridach na míled ic immirt écomlaind *forru*. Ro socht trá Mani īar ndíth na Fomōrach co Fācen *mac* nDubloṅsig co mbáatar fri ré cían i[c] cathugud. Do-rochair Fācen *de-side*. Do-rochair dano Sīaburchēnd *mac* Slisremuir ra Cobthach Cnessgel *mac* Geirg. & ro tafned Mani 7 Cobthach īar sin
 265 issin rīgthech īar cor áir a muntire, 7 ro gabsat co sētrech 7 co ferda in tech co mmatain, 7 ní deochas *forru* ind.

⁵⁵ MS *bá*: hair-stroke on *a*

⁵⁶ MS *bá*: hair-stroke on *a*

⁵⁷ MS *bá*: hair-stroke on *a*

⁵⁸ MS *aradna*

⁵⁹ MS *bá*: hair-stroke on *a*

⁶⁰ MS *bá*: hair-stroke on *a*

⁶¹ MS *bá*: hair-stroke on *a*

⁶² *punctus* in MS

⁶³ MS *scēmgal*, with *punctum delens* indicating *r* expunged

⁶⁴ *punctus* in MS

Pleasant, noble and well-mannered was the king's son who was before them, and although he was a youth in respect of age, he was a soldier in respect of great valour. He was mild-mannered in a banqueting-hall, and he was hardy in a fight, and he was a venomous snake; he would not forget³² hostility, he was a flame of battle, he was very strong in an attack, he was generous with treasure, he was pitiless in slaughter, he was the fire of a warrior, he was a strong stone of anger, he was a wave of judgement with regard to violence, he was a stoat with regard to swiftness, he was an oak with regard to strength, he was the spear of battle and of slaughter of the Three Connachta, and he was their ornament of an assembly and their dispenser³³ of treasures and their man well-fitted to be a king. He did not think it honourable for anyone in the world to come with as many men as him³⁴ and take a house in spite of him.

So after that they drove the Fomorians out of the house. Maine did not have the hand of a healer at that time, and nine Fomorians fell from the first attack by his hand alone. Then the plunderer of Asia Minor, namely Fabric Fíacail Neime, came to the forefront of the fight. And he began striking and beating and destroying and slaying the host before him, and no one could hold out against him until he reached the place where Maine was, and each one of them set his shield against the shield of the other, and they continued fighting until it was past midnight. And Fabric gave three grievous wounds to Maine, and Maine beheaded him after the fatigue of the fight (i.e. when Fabric was wearied by the fight). Now as for Conchobar, he had the fury of a champion, for thirty very strong warriors from the followers of Gerg fell by his hand, including his son, that is, including Conn Coscarach. So the host on either side inflicted great violence upon one another. The toes of their feet almost met as they struck one another.³⁵ The blood reached the knees of the men throughout the fort. Through the districts which were nearest to them, there was heard the splintering of the shields and the shield-bosses, and the clashing of the broad, grey spears and the hard, sharp swords in conflict, and the shattering fragments of the skulls as men were slaughtered, and the shouting of the soldiers as they were overpowered.³⁶ Then after killing some of the Fomorians,³⁷ Maine approached Fácen son of Dubloingsech and they fought for a long time. Fácen fell as a result of that. Moreover Síaburchend son of Slisremuir fell by the hand of Cobthach Cnesgel son of Gerg. But after that Maine and Cobthach were driven into the royal house after their followers had been defeated, and they held the house vigorously and manfully until morning, and they were not overcome there.

³² lit. 'was mindful of'

³³ lit. 'hand of giving'

³⁴ lit. 'under equal numbers'

³⁵ lit. 'at the mutual striking'

³⁶ lit. 'at the plying of odds against them'

³⁷ lit. 'after the destruction of the Fomorians'

§9. Is i nderiud na haidchi sin, do-chuaid in ben chétna, ad-fét na scéla do Chonchobar, co rocht co Meidb áit i mbaí ina cotlud ina himdai⁶⁵ i Crūachain Aí. Co n-ērbairt fria:

‘Dīa mbeth [p. 256^a] fāstini ocut,’ ar sī, ‘a Medb, níbad chotlud do-gēnta.’

270 ‘Cid and sin?’ ar Medb.

‘Atā Conchobar,’ ar sī, ‘oc gabāil ar Mani 7 do-fáeth leis Mani. 7 eirg-siu innossa 7 no ndígēla.’

& do-ringni rand tosaig laíde, 7 ro recair Medb triana cotlud.

VI.

WOMAN: 1. A Medb, cā cotlud do-gní?

In fetar cinnas a-taí?

275 Dīamsat fissid fáth imne,
ropad mithig duit ēirge.

MEDB: 2. A bé bán bulid co llí,

cā scél ūathmar innisi?

Cā tā námait do-thāet and?

280 Cīa halt doīne? Cīa n-anmand?

WOMAN: 3. Conchobar, cend na curad,

ardrí ilbūadach Ulad,

ní damair a bruth nō fē[i]rg,

coro thogla innocht (for) Glend Geirg.

285 MEDB: 4. Cīa bail i tá Gerg is Mani?

’Nā fuilet i n-ōenbali?

Ma tát, ní hassa a togail⁶⁶

do lucht tigi Conchobair.

WOMAN: 5. Mani, cid mór a menma,

290 im fēbas a degdelba,

nība leiss commus a chind⁶⁷

da thurus innocht don glind.

⁶⁵ MS *himdai*: hair-stroke on *i*

⁶⁶ *punctus* in MS

⁶⁷ *punctus* in MS

§9. At the end of that night, the same woman came, who had told the tidings to Conchobar, and she came up to Medb where she was sleeping in her bed in Crúachain Aí. And she said to her: 'If you had the gift of prophecy, o Medb,' she said, 'you would not be sleeping.' 'Why is that?' said Medb. 'Conchobar,' she said, 'is attacking Maine and Maine will fall by his hand. Go now and you will avenge him.' And she uttered the first stanza of a poem, and Medb replied in her sleep.

VI.

WOMAN: 1. O Medb, what sleeping do you do? (i.e. Why are you sleeping?)
Do you know the situation you are in?³⁸
If you were proficient as a prophet thus,
it would be time for you to arise.

MEDB: 2. O fair woman, beautiful with splendour,
what dreadful tale are you telling?
What are the enemies who are coming here?
What sort of people? What are their names?

WOMAN: 3. Conchobar, leader of the warriors,
high king of the Ulaid, of many victories,
has not endured (i.e. has given vent to) his fury and anger,
so that tonight he may attack Glenn Geirg.

MEDB: 4. Where are Gerg and Maine?
Are they not in the same place?
If they are, their destruction will not be easy
for Conchobar's household.

WOMAN: 5. Maine, although his courage is great,
in addition to the excellence of his good appearance,
will not have control of his mind³⁹
for his journey to the glen tonight.

³⁸ lit. 'how you are'

³⁹ lit. 'head'

MEDB: 6. Mad dīa marbthar Mani Mór,
bid díth cethern, bid ár slōg.

295 At-resat curaid fri gail –
iter Chrūachain is Emain.

WOMAN: 7. Érig is dīgail do mac,
tinóil cóiced Ól nÉcmacht.
Snaidfea na slūagu co serb,

300 mad dīa n-ēрге innossa, a Medb. A.

Dúscid Medb iar sin 7 dúscis Ailill, 7 ad-fét dó in fíis at-chonnairc, 7 ad-fét fon slúag iar sin.
'Nībo⁶⁸ fír ón ém,' ar Bricriu.

305 Ō 't-chuala Fīannamail mac Fergus[a]⁶⁹ Fordeirg sin .i. mac rechtaire na Crūachna, níro ernaid
fri cách, *acht* luid remi i n-īarmōracht Mani, ar ba⁷⁰ comalta dó-som Mani. Ar rop é int ochtmad
maccóem na Crūachna Fīannamail. Togais Medb lé secht cét fer n-armach a n-as dech do-rala i
Crūachain in tan sin. Is and sin do-riacht Domnall Derg Drechlethan mac Dubāin meic Ingamna. Lāech
hē-side is dech ro boí ar cúl scéith 7 claidib 7 gaí i cōiciud Chonnacht, & ba⁷¹ comalta dil dano do Mani
hē-side. & do-chuaid issin sligi cétnai ria cách. Trīcha lāech dano ba hed a lín, 7 Domnall ainm *cech* fír
dīb. Imthigis dano Medb iar sin ina réim ina ndíaid: Aslingi Medba connice sin 7 turtheda a himthechta.

310 §10. Imthús immorro Mani thair: ro gab ina chind co maethtráth éirgi arnabārach. 7 nīrbo sám
subach sādail ro cathed ind adaig sin eturru maróen. Ó 'ma-n-acca dóib ri suilsi ind laí, ro chumnig cách
a anfolaid dia chēli. & forópair Conchobar ar gressacht a muntire:
'Dīamtís Ulaid,' ar sē, 'no betis immalle frim-sa, ní fuléngtha in cath amal fūilngithir d'Ēmórchaib.'

⁶⁸ MS *nibó*: hair-stroke on *o*

⁶⁹ MS gives *-us* abbreviation: Diplom. (l. 33783) expands this to *-uis*, while Windisch suggests *leg. Ferguso* ('*Tochmarc Ferbe*', p. 490, n. 2). Although *-uis* is an alternative gen sg form, *Fergus* is written in full in l. 415, so I suggest that here *-a* has been omitted in error.

⁷⁰ MS *bá*: hair-stroke on *a*

⁷¹ MS *bá*: hair-stroke on *a*

MEDB: 6. If Maine Mór ('the Great') is killed,
 there will be destruction of troops, there will be slaughter of hosts.
 Warriors will rise up in valour –
 both Crúachain and Emain.

WOMAN: 7. Arise and avenge your son,
 assemble the province of Connacht.
 You will grievously cut the hosts asunder,
 if you arise now, o Medb.

Then Medb woke up and she woke Ailill, and she told to him the vision which she had seen, and after that she told [it] to the host.

'Indeed, that may not be true,' said Bricriu.

When Fíannamail son of Fergus Forderg ('the Bloody'), namely the son of the steward of Crúachain, heard that, he did not wait for everyone else, but he went forth in search of Maine, for Maine was his foster-brother. For Fíannamail was one of the eight youths of Crúachain. Medb selected to accompany her seven hundred armed men who were the best who were in Crúachain at that time. Then there came Domnall Derg Drechlethan ('the Red and Broad-faced'), son of Dubán son of Ingamain. He was the best warrior who was behind shield and sword and spear in the province of Connacht, and he also was a dear foster-brother to Maine. And he went on the same path in front of all the others. Moreover, thirty warriors was their number, and Domnall was the name of every man of them. Then after that Medb set out on her course after them: the Vision of Medb thus far and the account of her exploits.

§10. Now concerning Maine in the east: he held out as a leader until first light⁴⁰ the next day. And that night was not spent peacefully, cheerfully or restfully among either side.⁴¹ When the light of day enabled them to see each other,⁴² each one remembered his enmity towards the other. And Conchobar began to incite his followers:

'If it were the Ulaid,' he said, 'who were with me, the battle would not be permitted (i.e. to have gone on so long / to have been fought so poorly) as it is permitted by the Fomorians.'

⁴⁰ lit. 'soft/gentle time of rising', clearly a description referring to the time just before sunrise

⁴¹ lit. 'between them together'

⁴² lit. 'when there was a mutual seeing of it by them with the light of the day'

315 Ro dreb[r]aiñg gal i mbrunnib na Fomōrach don gressacht mór sin 7 dos-ratsat co dúr 7 co
 díchra frisin cathugud 7 nīro ansat de co ndechatar dar dorsib ind ríghigi innund. Ba cóem ém 7 ba
 hirgna in phelāit rígdā i ndechas and. Ba líach drocharadu furri. Ro boí cét mías findargit 7 trī chét do
 chrēdumu 7 trī chēt do fīnd(d)ruini and. Bātar dano trīcha esca do airgiut ōengil Espáne ar borddaib
 dabach. Bātar dano dā cét corn būabaill co n-imdēnam óir 7 argit, 7 trīcha coppán argit 7 trīcha coppán
 créduma, [p. 256^b] & cethracha gagar. Imsciñg línanairt gil co ndelbaib inñantachaib fri fraigid and.
 320 Is and sin imma-rocht dont slúag cechtarda *for* lár in tigi. Ropo díth dont slúag co mór and sin.
 Ro siacht Cobthach Cnesgel mac Geirg, iar slaidi na Fomōrach, cosin magin i mboí *Berngal* Brec ic
 dīchendugud na Connachtach. Do-fuit *Berngal* trā la *Cobthach* iar scís chomlaind. Do-rochair dano
 Būri Borbbriāthrach do láim Mani. 7 ro dāsed immi iar sin 7 ro n-immir *for* slúag na Fomōrach sechnōn
 in tigi, 7 do-rochair trīcha lāech dīb leis. Ó 't-chonnaire in cur cróda cathbūadach *Conchobar* in lain[n]i
 325 *forsa* rabi Mani, ro ndírig a dochum 7 ro frithāil-seom Mani co fīchtha furachair 7 bātar fri ré cían i[c]
 cathugud, 7 ro brissiset nōnbor *maccōem* fo cossaib. Teilgis Mani rout n-úrchair co feirg 7 lonnus co
 mboí ina chrois trí *Chonchobar*, 7 cēin boí *Conchobar* oc béim na sleigi ass, ro gon Mani don mánaís
 lethanglais boí ina láim. 7 do-dechaid Brod i fōrithin *Conchobair*. 7 ferais Mani trī crēchta aidbli fair, 7
 nírbo sétrech comlaind Brod iar sin. Impáis *Conchobar* iar sin fri Mani 7 ro n-ebrand do
 330 bráthbēmennaib do cech aird, co *torchair* leis marb cen anmain. 7 *forfōpair* iar sain ar erlech int slúag
 imme do *cech* leith isin tig, co torchratar bond fri bond 7 médi fri médi sechnōn in tigi. Cid fil and trá
acht, ní thérna nech i mbethaid dona trī coīcdaib lāech do-dechaid la *Conchobar acht* sé féin 7 Brod, 7
 cid ed ón nī slán *térnatar*. Tafnís *Conchobar* Cobthach mac Geirg ón dúnud immach.

§11. & i cén ro boí ina lenmain sechnón in maigi, do-chuaid ind ingen .i. Ferb ingen Geirg – 7 bé
 335 thastil immalle fria – cosin magin i mboí Mani ina chróligi fōla⁷² 7 ina chrōpartai[b],⁷³ 7 ro boí oc
 dērfadaig 7 oc mifri.

‘Dar brēthir ém,’ ar sī, ‘cīa taí th’ōenur innossa, mór n-aidchi ro ba⁷⁴ sochaide.’

& do-*ringni* in laīd-sea oc tabairt a thesta:

⁷² *punctus* in MS

⁷³ MS *chropartaig*

⁷⁴ MS *bá*: hair-stroke on *a*

Fury arose in the breasts of the Fomorians from that great incitement and they threw themselves resolutely and eagerly into the fight and they did not desist from it until they went inside through the doors of the royal house. Indeed, the royal palace, into which they went, was fair and renowned. It was grievous, the evil treatment [that was] in store for it.⁴³ There were a hundred platters of white silver and three hundred of brass and three hundred of white bronze therein. Moreover there were thirty vessels of pure-white Spanish silver on the sides of vats. Moreover there were two hundred drinking-horns with ornamentation of gold and silver, and thirty cups of silver and thirty cups of bronze, and forty vessels. A wall-hanging of white linen cloth with wonderful designs on was on the wall there.

Then the two hosts encountered one another⁴⁴ in the middle of the house. There was great destruction for the host there. Cobthach Cnesgel son of Gerg, after smiting the Fomorians, came to the place where Berngal Brecc was beheading the Connachta. Then Berngal fell by Cobthach's hand after the fatigue of the fight (i.e. Berngal fell, having been wearied by the fight). Moreover, Búire Borbbriathrach fell by Maine's hand. And then he became frenzied and he hurled himself on the host of the Fomorians throughout the house, and thirty warriors from among them fell by his hand. When Conchobar, the valiant champion victorious in battle, saw Maine's anger,⁴⁵ he turned himself towards him and he engaged Maine [in battle] furiously and keenly and they fought for a long time, and they trampled nine youths underfoot. Maine threw a cast angrily and and wrathfully so that it was like a cross through Conchobar, and while Conchobar was removing the spear from himself, Maine wounded him with the long grey spear which was in his hand. And Brod came to help Conchobar. And Maine inflicted three great wounds on him, and Brod was not fit for battle after that. Then Conchobar turned towards Maine and plied him with deadly blows from every direction, so that he fell dead and lifeless by his hand. And then he began hewing down the host around him on every side in the house, so that they fell foot to foot and and neck to neck throughout the house. However, none of the hundred and fifty warriors who came with Conchobar escaped alive except he himself and Brod, and nevertheless they did not escape unhurt. Conchobar pursued Cobthach son of Gerg out of the fort.

§11. And while he was pursuing him throughout the plain, the girl, that is, Ferb daughter of Gerg – and the female messenger along with her – went to the place where Maine was lying in his own blood⁴⁶ and in his clots of gore, and she wept and mourned.

‘Truly,’⁴⁷ she said, ‘although you are alone now, many nights you were part of a host.’

And she uttered this poem giving his praise:

⁴³ lit. ‘on it’

⁴⁴ lit. ‘it came mutually to the twofold host’

⁴⁵ lit. ‘the anger in which Maine was’

⁴⁶ lit. ‘in his blood-lying of blood’

⁴⁷ lit. ‘by an oath indeed’

VII.

1. A gillai, is derg do lepaid,
340 ní dam na déine deccair.
Olc sén i tñnac ó[t] tig;
bid mana dēr rit muntir.

2. Sochaide dia tartais olc,
'n aidchi ro bā i llongphort,
345 a meic Medba in murir,
a chulīan ard ardenig.

3. A meic Ailella nāch dis,
ní latt in gnīm ro maídis.
Is trúag rim chride is rom chlí,
350 do bith tall it bithligí.

4. A gillai, is gastu at-chonna[r]c!
Ropat slat óir fri hadart.
Cīaro boí do dál ri nech,
rob í do dál dēdenach.

355 5. Ropo garb do lám 'sin chath,
ropot iars[m]a⁷⁵ Fomórach.
Mór fúaim do builli fri cend,
sochaide i tñnac thimchell.

6. Ropo sēgda súaire do dath,
360 ropot *cumnech* comaltach,
ropat gasta dar cach glend,
sochaide i tñnac thimchell.⁷⁶

7. Ropo chóir dam-sa sáeth dít
araí chomraic cenco rícht.

⁷⁵ MS *iarsla*

⁷⁶ likely to be an eyeskip error (since this poem does not have a refrain-like structure): repetition of last line of preceding stanza, possibly due to the same word-ending *-end* in the rhyming word

VII.

1. O youth, your bed is red,
something which does not cause wonder to me.
Inauspicious was the omen with which you came from your house;
it will be a cause of tears for your followers.
2. There is a multitude to whom you have given misfortune,
on the night when you were in an encampment,
o son of Medb of the retinue,
o noble whelp of noble countenance.
3. O son of Ailill who is not weak,
yours is not (i.e. you did not achieve) the deed of which you boasted.
It is wretched for my heart and for my body,
that you are lying dead⁴⁸ yonder.
4. O youth, the most dexterous whom I have seen!
You were a staff of gold upon a cushion.
Although your [military] encounter was with someone (i.e. meeting Conchobar in battle),
it was [also] your last encounter (i.e. an encounter with death).
5. Your hand was harsh in the battle,
you brought about⁴⁹ the unhappy end of the Fomorians.
Your blows against a head [caused] a great noise,
there was a multitude on whose behalf you came.
6. Your appearance was pleasing and noble,
you were mindful, fulfilling your duty,
you were agile across every glen,
there was a multitude on whose behalf you came.
7. Sorrow on account of you was fitting for me
on account of [our] union although it [our union] was not accomplished.

⁴⁸ lit. 'in your perpetual-lying'

⁴⁹ lit. 'were'

365 Nī lugaite in grád cen chess,
cid de thic m'amless.

8. Is sáeth lim in ligi i taí,
a gillai sea, a *meic* Meidbi,
7 is sáeth ram chride,
370 intī fuil 'cot urnaide.

9. Rop annam lat bith cen t'arm,
(nó) cono tarla is tū secmarb,
corot gæ̃t in gaī glan glē,
is corot tregd araile.

375 10. 'S corot letar claideb crúaid,
's coro šil bróen fola dar grúaid,
[p. 257^a] 's coro gabsat immut uli;
roptar athig ōenchuri.

11. Uch, cid ro bātar dam-sa,
380 naro fēgsat ardinsa?
Mo lennán, mo thoga tréoit
is m'fēr diŋgbāla degséoit.

12. Is m'[f]er diŋgbāla frim lá,
Mani Mōr *mac Ailella*.
385 Ba marb-sa da iŋgnais de
cenco tī-sium dam aire.

13. A bratt corcra i nn-inud rīg,
is mór dom-ber i n-imśnīm.
Dar[a] ēis nīr gab nech úad,
390 ō ro gab armu d'imlúad.

My⁵⁰ love, without failing, is not the less,
although it is from it [the love] that my misfortune comes.

8. The grave in which you are is a sorrow for me,
o youth here, o son of Medb,
and it is a sorrow for my heart,
which is waiting for you.

9. It was rare for you to be without your weapon,
until it came to pass and you were stark-dead (i.e. until it came to pass that you were without your
weapon, and that was because you were dead),
until the bright, shining spear wounded you,
and another pierced you.

10. And a harsh sword cut you to pieces,
and a shower of blood flowed across [your] cheek,
and until all surrounded you;
they were churls of a single troop.

11. Alas, what were they to me,
they who have not seen great difficulties?
My beloved, my choice from among the host
and my fitting companion of precious treasure.

12. He is my fitting companion for my lifetime,
Maine Mór son of Ailill.
I will die⁵¹ from the loss of him
because he may not come to look after me.

13. His purple cloak in the place of a king,
it grieves me greatly.⁵²
After it (i.e. taking up weapons), no one went from him [alive],
since he took weapons for wielding.

⁵⁰ lit. 'the'

⁵¹ lit. 'I will be dead'

⁵² lit. 'it is much that it puts me into grief'

14. Sé féin ar lār in taigi,
's a lám arna himdibi
's a gaī – 's i⁷⁷ lāech ras cuir –
's a chend i lláim Conchobair.

395 15. 'S a chlaideb tortbuillech trén,
ro gab úad i n-etarcén,
's a scíath bail da-rochair de,
i[c] cosnam a muntere.

400 16. Coíca lāech immi fo thrí,
trúag a ndul uili ar nefní,
mór a n-osnad: tan ros [g]ab⁷⁸
'ca chosnam, da-rochratar.

17. Hé-sium féni – noco bréc –
ro fodail mór sét.
405 Nī lugu do-rochair de,
oc cosnam a muntire.

18. Atá 'na ligi co crúaid,
maccōem Connacht, glaini a slūaig.
Mairg dia muntir – mīad glan glē –
410 7 mairg dia glanchēile.

19. Noco chumcim-sea ní duit,
air dom-rat[ad] i ndrochbeirt.
Is briste mo chride de,
icot fégad, a gillai. A.

⁷⁷ MS *í*: hair-stroke on *i*

⁷⁸ MS *cab*

14. He himself is on the floor of the house,
and his hand, having been cut off,
and his spear – he thrust it into a warrior –
and his head in Conchobar's hand.

15. And his strong sword of heavy blows,
which he [Conchobar] took far from him,
and his shield where it fell from him,
defending his followers.

16. One hundred and fifty warriors around him,
a pity that they all perished,⁵³
great their sighing: when they began
defending him, they fell.

17. He himself – it is not a lie –
distributed many treasures.
In spite of it⁵⁴ he fell,
defending his followers.

18. He is cruelly lying there,
the young man of Connacht, the purest one⁵⁵ of his host.
Woe to his followers – bright pure honour –
and woe to his pure companion [Ferb].

19. I can do nothing for you,
for I have been cruelly grieved.⁵⁶
My heart is broken because of it,
beholding you, o youth.

⁵³ lit. 'went to nothing'

⁵⁴ lit. 'no less because of it'

⁵⁵ lit. 'purity'

⁵⁶ lit. 'I have been brought into an evil burden (i.e. of grief)'

415 §12. Is and sin do-roacht Fíannamail *mac* Fergus *Forderg* trí choícait lāech cucu. Ro tūarascaib ind
echlach dī-si, & ro innis scéla garba dó-som. Ro dassied immi-sium ĩar sin, 7 ro ĩarair eōlas airm i
faigbed Chonchobar, 7 do-ríngset laíd eturru:

VIII.

FERB: 1. Fíannamail seo chucun-ni,
ro ĩarraided acun-ni.

420 Cid maith a bés oca thig,
ro scar do grés ria muntir.

FÍANNAMAIL: 2. A ingen, is garb in scél
innissi dam tria grés ngér.
Scarad fri muntir – mét ngal –
425 mas ĩat-so da-rochratar.

FERB: 3. Is ĩat sain do munter-su;
araĭ cenco fint[er]-su(m),⁷⁹
ro marbsat, ro marbtha i fat:
robo chomrac dergnámát.

430 FÍANNAMAIL: 4. Ocus Mani, in marend hé,
mo chomthach, mo chocēile,
mo rí, mo ruiiri 'com thaig,
mo duni ālāind inmain?

FERB: 5. Is goirt lim aní at-beri,
435 a Fíannamail fíannaidi,
ro merad immut cen acht;
fo-géba sund a thigleacht.

FÍANNAMAIL: 6. Eōlas dam – ram fōrraig ferg –
ma ra-fētar, a glan-Fērb.

⁷⁹ MS *fintatsum*

§12. Then Fíannamail son of Fergus Forderg, with one hundred and fifty warriors, came towards them. The messenger [the female messenger from Dúnad Geirg] made [his arrival] known to her, and she [Ferb] told [the] bitter tidings to him. Then he was enraged, and he asked for knowledge of where he would find Conchobar, and they performed a poem between them:

VIII.

FERB: 1. Here is Fíannamail coming towards us,
he was sought by us.
Although his manner may be good at home,⁵⁷
he has forever parted from his kinsmen.

FÍANNAMAIL: 2. O maiden, the tidings are bitter
that you tell to me by means of a painful poem.
[There has been] separating from kinsmen – greatness of valour –
if it is these who fell.

FERB: 3. These are your kinsmen,
nevertheless, although you may not know [it];
they killed, they were killed far and wide:⁵⁸
it was a battle of bitter foes.

FÍANNAMAIL: 4. And Maine, does he live,
my companion, my friend,
my king, my chieftain at home,⁵⁹
my fair, beloved friend?

FERB: 5. That which you say is painful for me,
o warrior Fíannamail,
you were crazed without a doubt;
you will find his last resting-place here.

FÍANNAMAIL: 6. [Give] information to me – rage has overpowered me –
if you know it, o fair Ferb.

⁵⁷ lit. 'at his house'

⁵⁸ lit. 'in distance'

⁵⁹ lit. 'at my house'

- 440 Apair rim cīa bail i tá,
Mani Mór mac Ailella.
- FERB: 7. Uchān, achān air!
 'Nā fetar, a Fīannamail,
 do-rochair Mani malle
445 is ōgus a muntire?
- FÍANNAMAIL: 8. Cīa do-rat in cath crúaid?
 Cīa do-rairni fó dimbúaid?
 7 cīa ro marb Mane
 7 sīat i n-ōenbaile?
- 450 FERB: 9. Ulaid tāncatar atúaid,
 a nirt chatha chlaidebrúaid,
 coro gabsat fōraind tech,
 co trí coícdaib lāech laimthech.
- FÍANNAMAIL: 10. Ticfa fri Ultaib in scél;
455 at bidbaid cen imarlén.
 Mairfitir and, tīar is tair,
 dīa marat na Connachtaig.
- FERB: 11. Do-berim mo chobais duit,
 a Fīannamail, ūair at roglic
460 na dechaid d'Ultaib – cen chlith –
 acht óendías ina mbethaid.
- FÍANNAMAIL: 12. Cade in días térnatar and?
 Cīa halt daíne, cīa [a] n-anmand?
 7 cía do-chuatar ass,
465 do-ringset mōr diar n-amles?

Tell me where he is,
Maine Mór son of Ailill.

FERB: 7. Woe, alas on account of it!
Do you not know, o Fíannamail,
that Maine has fallen together
with all of his followers?

FÍANNAMAIL: 8. Who fought the cruel battle?
Who appeared at the defeat?
And who killed Maine
when they were⁶⁰ in the same place?

FERB: 9. It was the Ulaid who came from the north,
with⁶¹ strength of battle of bloody swords,
and they took the house in spite of us,
with one hundred and fifty daring warriors.

FÍANNAMAIL: 10. The tale will go against the Ulaid;
they are guilty without great injury.
They will be killed there, in the west and in the east,
if the Connachta remain alive.

FERB: 11. I swear to you,⁶²
o Fíannamail, since you are very skilful,
that of the Ulaid – without concealment –
only a single pair departed alive.

FÍANNAMAIL: 12. Where are the pair who escaped there?
What sort of men, what are their names?
And how did they go from here,
those who have done much to harm us?

⁶⁰ lit. 'and they'

⁶¹ lit. 'in'

⁶² lit. 'give you my confidence'

FERB: 13. *Conchobar* is Brod – ⁸⁰cen brath⁸⁰ –
is iat *térnatar* assin chath;
dā gaī trí *Chonchobar* féin,
's a trí tri Brod, ní imcén.

470 FÍANNAMAIL: 14. Cīaro guin *Conchobar* crom?
Cīa do-rat i n-ēcomlond?
Nī bēoda a dula cen geiss,
ma tá air-sium dluig legis.

FERB: 15. [p. 257^b] Mani ro guin *Chonchobar*
475 di šleig – nīrb[o] orddugud.
Ro marb-*som* Mani iar sin.
Is é a ċīr, a Fīannamail. F.

Imthigid Fīannamail iar sin i n-īarmōracht *Conchobair* co tarla Nīall Cendċind *mac Conchobair*
ina agid, 7 cét fer n-armach do thegluch *Conchobair* immalle fris ic iarraid *Chonchobair*. Ro ferad gleo
480 fíchda feochair eturru. Marōen ro imred forlond fer *for* Fīannamail *de-side*, 7 nīr damad cert comlaind
dó, ná co torchair marb cen anmain. Do-rochair *dano* trícha lāech lais-[s]ium a ōenur.

§13. Forfōpair and sin ind ingen ic fēgad gilla Connacht.

‘Dar brēthir ém,’ ar sī, ‘nī ar meth gascid ná heḡnama do-rochrabair-si *acht* forlond do imbirt *foraib*.
7 ummoro trā,’ ar sī, ‘da-rochair far comlund lib-si cīa do-rochrabair.’

485 7 ro chan in laīd seo sīs:

IX.

1. Trūag sin, a gillu Connacht.

Ní ċuīl clúim ria bar n-adart.

Bar lēm-si, is léim cen follacht.

Fúarabair béim dar amarc.

^{80–80} precedes *is Brod* in the MS, with marks of transposition

FERB: 13. Conchobar and Brod – without deceit –
it is they who escaped from the battle;
two spears through Conchobar himself,
and three of them through Brod, not very far away.

FÍANNAMAIL: 14. Who has wounded Conchobar the crooked?
Who has overpowered [him]?⁶³
His going without prohibition is not auspicious,
if he has a desire for healing.⁶⁴

FERB: 15. It is Maine who wounded Conchobar
with a spear – it had not been planned.⁶⁵
He killed Maine after that.
That is the truth of it, o Fíannamail.

Then Fíannamail went in search of Conchobar, until Níall Cendfind ('the Fair-headed') son of Conchobar came towards him, and one hundred armed men from Conchobar's household troops with him, looking for Conchobar. A furious, fierce battle was fought between them. Superiority of numbers of men was inflicted on Fíannamail at the same time (i.e. many men attacked him at once) as a result of that, and the right of equal numbers was not granted to him (i.e. they denied him the right of a fair fight with only one man at a time), until he fell dead and lifeless. Nevertheless thirty warriors fell by his hand alone.

§13. Then the girl fell to looking at the youths of Connacht.

'Truly,'⁶⁶ she said, 'it is not on account of a lack of skill at arms or valour that you fell, but on account of the superiority of numbers that was inflicted on you. And yet nevertheless,' she said, 'an equal number to you fell by your hand, although you fell.'

And she sang this poem below:

IX.

1. That is wretched, o youths of Connacht.
There is no down for your pillow.
Your leap is a leap (i.e. into death) that leaves no trace.
You experienced a blow out of sight (i.e. unexpected / underhand).

⁶³ lit. 'put [him] into oppression'

⁶⁴ i.e. Conchobar will not have time to be healed because Fíannamail is going to find him and kill him

⁶⁵ lit. 'there was not a planning'

⁶⁶ lit. 'by an oath indeed'

- 490 2. Cā slūag rop āilliu innāthe,
is bad fērr i cend clēthe?
Bar ndelb, ropo delb dígle;
is [sn]īthe⁸¹ serb far snāthe.
3. Snáthe far ruisc ro mebaid;
495 fuarabair dig cuisc tonnaid.
Ropo chrúaid leo far ndebaid;
ro dedail gleo i n-uar collaib.
4. Ro marbsaid cét fer n-armach.
Ro-for-rép in cú codnach.
- 500 Bar scél, is crúaid 's is caingnech;
is mana dér co homnach.
5. Is trúag mo chumaing-sa rib
ic scailiud dér is ic mifrig,
ropad fērr⁸² lim-sa dul(a) lib
505 is mo loscud do chrithrib.
6. Sib slúag rop āilliu i n-hÉrind.
Gillai Chonnacht, nos caínim.
Cach ōen ros marb, ní sēguind.
Fégaim cech mbaidb foa fuīdim.
- 510 7. Ropo mór far muirn 'sin chath
i n-agid na Fomōrach.
Mór mban da-gēna 'uch, ach'
i ndegaid na ro-ūallach.
8. Ūallach thāncatar is' tech:
515 nocorb athair dóib aithech.
Ō ro gabsat cóir na cleth,
nocorb allic dóib teched.

⁸¹ MS *frithe*

⁸² Diplom. notes: 'letter (?a) erased after *rr*' (p. 1152, n. 5)

2. What host was fairer than you,
and was better against close ranks of warriors?
Your form, it was a vengeful form;⁶⁷
your life-thread is a bitter spun thing (i.e. it has been bitterly spun).

3. The life-thread of your eye has broken;
you have found a punishing draught of death.
They found your fight harsh;
combat separated out into your corpses.

4. You killed a hundred armed men.
The chief hound [Conchobar] has destroyed you.
Your tale is harsh and troublesome;
it is a fear-inspiring cause of tears.

5. My ability on your behalf is wretched (i.e. I am not able to do anything for you),
weeping⁶⁸ and mourning,
I would prefer to go with you
and be burnt by flames.

6. You were the fairest host in Ireland.
The youths of Connacht, I lament them.
Each one who has killed them, he is not a champion.
I look at every scald-crow under their hem. (i.e. crows picking at corpses).

7. Your valorous spirit was mighty in the battle
against the Fomorians.
Many women will say ‘uch, ach’
after the loss of the very proud ones.

8. Proudly they came to the house:
a churl was not a father to [any of] them (i.e. they were nobly born).
Since they undertook the fitting behaviour of warriors,
fleeing was not desirable for them.

⁶⁷ lit. ‘form of avenging’

⁶⁸ lit. ‘releasing tears’

9. Ro bīathsaid Baidb co mbáni

a llus airm – lór a chrūadi –

520 gillai Chonnacht co cáimi,
daíni ra tromalt trūagi. T.

§14. Do-roacht iar sin Domnall Derg Drechlethan *mac* Dubāin faichthi in dúnaid.

‘Maith ém a llus gaī 7 claidib,’ ar bé thastil, ‘Domnall Derg *mac* Dubāin. Lond fri úair ngascid cách tānic and, 7 ropad mór a chobair dia chomaltu dīana tairsed ina bethaid.’

525 Ō ’t-chuala ind ingen sin, do-dechaid immach ina agid, 7 ro gress co mór, 7 do-ringni rand 7 ros frecair Domnall Derg Drechlethan.

X.

FERB: 1. A Domnaill *meic* Dubāin dil,
a grīb in gascid gābthig!
Cidat lond im gním garta,
530 ro marbad do chomalta.

DOMNALL: 2. Cīaro thuit Mani in mīlid,
ra chind ara chomdīnib
im gaís, im gasced, im gart,
im enech is im ánlecht.

535 FERB: 3. Nī hopair lāech na ndéni,
uchfad ‘uch’ is ēcaíni;
ōr na targa Mani de,
ba ferr calma fri nānte.

540 DOMNALL: 4. Bam tarb tnúith isna tressaib;
fo-cicher crú tria chnessaib;
con-selub mór bēmmend búan
ar Conchobar claidebrūad.

9. You have fed the pallid⁶⁹ Badb
by means of battle-equipment – sufficient its hardness –
beautiful youths of Connacht,
men who have been grievously fostered by misery.

§14. Then Domnall Derg Drechlethan son of Dubán came to the green before the fort.
‘Good indeed by virtue of his spear and of his sword,’ said the female messenger, ‘is Domnall Derg son of Dubán. Bold in a time of feats of arms is the one who has come there, and his help for his foster-brother would have been great if he had come to him while he was alive.’
When the girl heard that, she came out to meet him, and she incited [him] greatly, and she performed a quatrain and Domnall Derg Drechlethan replied to her.

X.

- FERB: 1. O Domnall, son of dear Dubán,
 o falcon of the deadly feats of arms!
 Even though you are bold concerning a deed of honourable behaviour,
 your foster-brother has been killed.
- DOMNALL: 2. Although Maine the soldier fell,
 he excelled beyond his contemporaries
 concerning wisdom, concerning feats of arms, concerning honourable behaviour,
 concerning honour and concerning kindness.
- FERB: 3. It is not the deed of warriors that you do,
 sighing ‘uch’ and lamenting;
 since Maine will not return as a result of it,
 deeds of valour against enemies would be better.
- DOMNALL: 4. I will be a bull of fury in the battles;
 blood will burst through skin;⁷⁰
 I will smite many enduring blows
 against Conchobar the red-bladed.

⁶⁹ lit. ‘with whiteness’

⁷⁰ lit. ‘skins’

- FERB: 5. Nīrbo ró Conchobar caīn,
i ndígail Mani *memnmnaig*,
545 ōr nī tharga is nīr gein
a mac samla asin Chrūachain.
- DOMNALL: 6. Conchobar, cid mór a blad,
7 Nīall is Feradach,
i ndígail Mani ro cerb
550 nos li[ú]nfea mo lám, a Ēerb.
- FERB: 7. [p. 258^a] Dambad tussu, a Domnaill Deirg,
no marbtais Ulaid tri Ēeirb,
ropad bladach a dīgail
for scéol Mani mórgnīmaig.
- 555 DOMNALL: 8. Dāig is ē-sium féin ro beb,
Mani Mórgor – mēt mīled –
noco rag-sa síar dom thig,
na raib fer bethaid d’Ultaib.
- FERB: 9. Ropad sám ram chride caīn,
560 ropad dídnad dom anmain:
dīthnacht Ulad uili ind,
dot láim dremuin, a Domnaill. .A.

565 Nīrbo chían inn irnaide do Domnall co n-acca chuci in mbuidin móir i mbáatar cethri chēt fer n-
armach im Ēeradach Lámfota mac Conchobair. Im-sái cách díb dochum a chéli. Ro imred *forlín* fer
and-*side* for Domnall, 7 ro dásed immi-sium 7 do-rochair coíca láech lais. 7 do-rochair fer cech fīr dia
muntir. 7 ro gon-som féin Feradach ba dí. Do-ríngned guin galand de-sium and sin, 7 ro díchend
Feradach hé 7 ro lá a ulaig commaīdmi. 7 ro díchennait a muntir 7 ro laad a n-ulach commaīdmi.

FERB: 5. [Killing] Conchobar the fair would not be too much,
in vengeance for Maine the bold,
since there will not come and there has not been born
out of Crúachain his equal.

DOMNALL: 6. Conchobar, though his renown be great,
and Níall and Feradach,
to avenge Maine whom he [Conchobar] hacked apart,
my hand will wound them, o Ferb.

FERB: 7. If it were you, o Domnall Derg,
whom the Ulaid had slain on account of Ferb,
his [Maine's] revenge would be renowned
in the tale of Maine of great deeds.

DOMNALL: 8. Since it is he himself who has died,
Maine Mórgor – greatness of a soldier –
I will not go back westwards to my house,
until there may not be a living man [left] of the Ulaid.

FERB: 9. It would be comfort for my good heart,
it would be consolation for my soul:
The destruction of all the Ulaid there,
by your furious hand, o Domnall.

Domnall did not have to wait long⁷¹ until he saw coming towards him a⁷² great host in which were four hundred armed men including Feradach Lámfota ('of the Long Hand') son of Conchobar. Each of them turned towards his opponent. A superior number of men was inflicted on Domnall there, and he became enraged and fifty warriors fell by his hand. And a man fell for every man of his followers. And he himself wounded Feradach twice. A mortal wound was given to him then, and Feradach beheaded him and sent out his shout of victory. And his followers were beheaded and their [the Ulaid's] shout of victory was sent out.

⁷¹ lit. 'the waiting was not long for Domnall'

⁷² lit. 'the'

§15. Do-chuaid ind ingen ĩar sin co mbaí ic fégað Mani.

‘Is étig,’ ar sĭ, ‘atāthar and sin innossa, a gillai. 7 bam marb dot chumaid, cid tréot ro marbad m’athair

570 7 a mac, 7 is dóig nĭba hed amáin dĭa tora Medb.’

7 do-ringni in laĩd-sea sĭs tria thursi:

XI.

1. Trúag ám sin, a meic Medba,

a gillai ālaind ergna:

is fuilech forderg do chnes.

575 Do-dechaid dĭt ar n-amles.

2. Is triut ro marbad m’athair;

ropo deglāech degathaig.

Is triut ro marbad a mac:

nĭ hassa dam a dermat.

580 3. Is triut do-gēntar mór d’ulc:

at-gén arin gné fil orut.

Is mór d’ulc bias de

d’óes Mani 7 Ğeirbe.

4. Is briste mo chride de:

585 ic fégað do chrólige.

Mallacht ar láim ro[t] letair

is dot-rat i ndrochlepaid.

5. Mór n-ingén dĭa tibre sáeth,

mór mban, do marbad, a glangáeth.

590 Mór n-airecht bias ocot gul;

is dot tesbaid-siu th’ōenur.

6. Ropot ālaind ā chíanaib,

cut chulēnaib ’con fĭadaig.

§15. Then the girl went until she was looking at Maine.

‘It is hideous,’ she said, ‘that you are there now, o youth. And I will die out of grief for you, although it is on account of you that my father and his son were killed, and it is likely that it will not be only that (i.e. more people will die) when Medb arrives.’

And she performed this poem below on account of sorrow:

XI.

1. That is wretched indeed, o son of Medb,
o beautiful, well-known youth:
your skin is blood-stained and wounded.
Our misfortune came from you.

2. It is on account of you that my father was killed;
he was a good warrior descended from a good fighter.
It is on account of you that his son was killed:
it is not easy for me to forget it.

3. It is on account of you that much evil will be done:
I have recognised it from the appearance that is on you.
There will be much evil resulting from it
for the people of Maine and Ferb.

4. My heart is broken as a result of it:
beholding you lying in blood.⁷³
A curse on the hand that has wounded you
and has brought you to a disastrous bed.

5. Many are the girls to whom the killing of you will bring sorrow,
many the women, o pure, skilful [youth].
Many are the assemblies who will lament you;
it is on account of the loss of you, you alone.

6. You were beautiful once,⁷⁴
with your hounds at the hunt.

⁷³ lit. ‘your blood-lying’

⁷⁴ lit. ‘from of old’

Ropo mór let do *menma*
595 im *fébas* do degdelba.

7. Isat étig innossa,
isat bána do bassa.
Is mairg na cifea – dar lind –
ro scar do chend rit cholaind.

600 8. Olc in scél *bērthair* síar
co Finnabair na *nglangiāll*:
tāsc a brāthar dī co feirg,
is a esbaid ar glan-*Fēirb*.

9. Ailill 7 Medb don maig,
605 nī biat sīat i mbethaid.
Im-sod a [n]gné do grūaide.
Nī mé naba lór trūage. T.

§16. Is and sin ra-sochtatar a *dā mac* co *Conchobar* .i. *Níall 7 Feradach*. Da-rocht *dano* Medb co secht cétaib léach lé co mboí ās cind ind āрмаige. Do-riṅgni crūdchippi grinni bec dī, 7 torcaib idna
610 catha rempi 7 ros dírig ar ammus *Conchobair* do dīgail a mmeicc 7 a muntire fair. & cīarbo chnedach crēchtach *Conchobar*, noco n-ic imgabāil Medba ro boí, acht is 'ca iarraid, conos tarla tul fri tul. Gebid cách díb sroigled 7 essorcoin, lēod 7 letrad, brúd 7 básugud a chēle. Ro fuc Medb and-*side* Tolc Míled i cath na nUltach co *torchair* cóiciur lee, im dá *mac Conchobair* .i. im *Níall Cendfind 7 im Feradach Lām̃fota*. Ro gab *dano Conchobar* scaindred 7 répad 7 mudugud int slúaig aile *amal* lēomain
615 londchrēchtaig eter [p. 258^b] banbraid, corbo díanleges dó, *amal* ro thuitset a gaí chró ass, la méit na ferggi ro gab iar *marbad* a *dā mac*.

Your courage was great
along with the excellence of your fair form.

7. You are hideous now,
your hands are white.

Woe betide – in our opinion – he who will not lament:
your head has separated from your body.

8. Terrible is the tale which will be carried westwards
to Finnabair of the pure hostages:
the news of the death of her brother [will be carried] angrily to her,
and his loss for fair Ferb.

9. Ailill and Medb from the plain,
they will not be alive (i.e. bear to remain alive).

Your cheeks have changed their appearance.

I am not one who has not had enough misery (i.e. I have had enough misery).⁷⁵

§16. Then his two sons, namely Níall and Feradach, came to Conchobar. Moreover Medb came with seven hundred warriors with her until she was overlooking the battlefield. She made a small hardened battle-formation out of a troop for herself, and she raised a battle standard before them, and she directed them [her troops] against Conchobar to take vengeance on him for her son and his followers. And although Conchobar was severely wounded,⁷⁶ he did not avoid Medb, but rather he sought her out, until they came face to face.⁷⁷ Every one of them began striking and smiting, hacking and wounding, crushing and slaying one another. Then Medb brought [the weapon called] *Tolc Míled* ('Soldiers' Breach') into battle against the Ulaid so that five men fell at her hand, including Conchobar's two sons, namely Níall Cendfind and Feradach Lámfota. However, Conchobar began scattering and rending and destroying the other host like a fierce, wounded lion among a herd of young pigs, so that he was swiftly healed, while his wound dressings fell from him, on account of the extent of the anger which took hold, after his two sons had been killed.

⁷⁵ lit. 'it is not me who may not be sufficient of misery'

⁷⁶ lit. 'wounded injured'

⁷⁷ lit. 'forehead to forehead'

Maidid *for* Meidb ĩar sin 7 do-fuittet trĳ coĳcait lĳech lĳanchalma dia muntir, 7 nos-berat na ferchutredaig ass hĳ ĩar sin, *amal* ba⁸³ bĳs dĳob, 7 ro len Conchobar in maidm co ndechaid dar Mag n-Ini immach. Impĳais Conchobar ĩar sin fri dĳunud nĳGeirg dia indriud. Atagat munter Geirg and-side im
620 Chobthach Cnesgel cath crĳda comnart do Chonchobur, ic cosnam a ndĳnaid. Im-sĳi Conchobar chucu *amal fĳel* fo⁸⁴ chĳairib, 7 feraid comlund fri Cobthach, 7 do-rochair Cobthach de-side, 7 ro marbad cech ĳen ba inĳchta dia muntir. & at-aig Conchobar lais ina fĳair d'ĳr 7 d'argut 7 d'[f]indruini 7 do chornaib 7 do choppĳanaib 7 d'escraib 7 d'arm 7 d'ĳtuch. Ro fuc dano leis in dabaig umai ro boĳ is' tig. 7 no fiurad forba Ulad uili a llĳn do lind, & is ria at-berthea Ųl nĳGĳala la Ultu, fo bĳth is teni gĳail no bĳd i nĳemain
625 is' tig i n-ibthea hĳ. 7 is ųad ro ainmniged Loch Gĳala Umai i nĳDaminis crĳche Ulad, ar is foĳ atĳ indiu i ndĳamraib.

Do-rat dano leis in rĳgain .i. Nuagil ingin Ergi, 7 a hingin .i. Feirb, 7 na trĳ coĳcait ingen immalle fria. At-bath fo chĳtĳir Ferb 7 a trĳ coĳcait ingen immalle fria do chumaid na macraide; at-bath dano Nuagel do chumaid a fir 7 a dĳ mac. Ro claided ųag do ĳeirb ĩar sin, 7 ro tĳcbad a lĳa 7 ro scrĳbad [a]
630 ainm Oguim, 7 do-ringned дума immon licc, conid Duma Ferbi a ainm ri Rĳith Ini aniar-tĳaid atĳ. Imthigid Conchobar co mbĳaid 7 choscur co rocht co ĳemain 7 ad-fĳt a scĳla ų thĳs co dered do Mugain. 7 ro rĳid fria ĳĳli .i. Ferchertne mac Dergerdne meic Gairb meic Fir Rosa Rĳaid meic Rudraige, co ndernad glĳnĳthe airchetail co cummair do chumnigud in scĳoil sin. Conid ĩar sin ro chan-som in laĳd seo sĳs, 7 ro fĳsig ind ĳicsiu dĳ-som combad fĳasaĳt don Tĳin in scĳl-so.⁸⁵

⁸³ MS *bĳ*: hair-stroke on *a*

⁸⁴ MS *fĳ*: hair-stroke on *o*

⁸⁵ only the top of *so* is visible, the bottom half is faded

Then Medb was defeated and one hundred and fifty very brave warriors from among her followers fell, and then her⁷⁸ bodyguards bore her away, as was their custom, and Conchobar pursued the routed army until it passed beyond Mag Ini. After that Conchobar turned towards Gerg's fort in order to lay it waste. There Gerg's followers, led by Cobthach Cnesgel, fought a fierce, very powerful fight against Conchobar, defending their fort. Conchobar turned towards them like a wolf among sheep, and he fought against Cobthach, and Cobthach fell as a result of that, and every one of his followers who was capable of feats was killed. And Conchobar took with him that which he found of gold and silver and white bronze and of drinking horns and of goblets and of vessels and of armour and of clothing. Moreover he carried off with him the brass vat which was in the house. And its fullness of ale would suffice the whole territory of Ulster, and on account of it, it used to be called *Ól nGúala* by the Ulaid, because a fire of coal used to be in Emain in the house in which it was drunk. And Loch Gúala Umai, in Daim-Inis in the territory of Ulster, has been named from it, for it [the vat] is concealed⁷⁹ under it [the lake] today.

Then he brought with him the queen, namely Nuagel daughter of Erg, and her daughter, namely Ferb, and the one hundred and fifty maidens together with her. Ferb died immediately, and her one hundred and fifty maidens together with her, from grief for the youths; Nuagel died moreover from grief for her husband and her two sons. A grave was dug for Ferb after that, and her grave-stone was raised and her name was written in Ogam,⁸⁰ and a grave-mound was made around the stone, so that Duma Ferbi ('Ferb's Grave-mound') is its name, which is beside Ráth Ini in the north-west. Conchobar went victoriously and triumphantly until he arrived at Emain and he told his tidings to Mugain from beginning to end. And he told his poet, namely Ferchertne son of Dergerdne, son of Garb, son of Fer Rosa Rúad ('the Red'), son of Rudrach, to make a poetical composition⁸¹ to commemorate that tale in summary. And after that he composed this poem given below, and the poetic art revealed to him that this tale would be a preface to the *Táin*.

⁷⁸ lit. 'the'

⁷⁹ lit. 'in hidden places'

⁸⁰ lit. 'her name of Ogam was written'

⁸¹ possibly including the concept of 'outline-poem'; see 'Textual Notes', p. 110

TEXTUAL NOTES

The textual complexities associated with the interpretation of *TF* require extensive textual notes, and for this reason I have divided these notes into several sub-chapters dealing with different aspects of the text. The first sub-chapter concerns the issue of textual correspondences between *TF* and other medieval Irish texts. Since this is particularly pertinent to §1, which in addition is one of the most difficult sections to interpret, the textual notes to this section are also included here. This is followed by textual notes to the rest of the prose in the tale, covered section by section. The poetry is treated separately since, as well as questions of textual interpretation, the metre of each poem must be discussed individually. Finally, the extended discussion regarding the vessel *Ól nGúala* is given its own textual note.

Textual Correspondences and Textual Notes to §1

Textual Correspondences

Elsewhere I have argued that, in the opening description of Maine's troops, there is strong evidence that the *TF*-author was borrowing material directly from other texts, most notably *Táin Bó Fraích*, but also *De Chophur in Dá Muccida*, *Imtheachta Aeniasa* and possibly *Táin Bó Dartada*.¹ I demonstrated how he skilfully combined his various sources, as well as embellishing them with phrases drawn from other formulae or perhaps invented by him. These arguments in favour of textual borrowing are of significance here, since §1 is particularly difficult to interpret, and so if we accept that the *TF*-author derived his material from these other texts, comparison with them may help to understand some of the complexities of our text. Moreover, while I will not reiterate the arguments made in my article, some additional comments should be made.

Firstly, it should be noted that for comparisons between *TF* and *TBF*, in my article and in my discussion below, I use Meid's 1974 edition of *TBF*, which is based on the LL-version of the text with some *variae lectiones* in the *apparatus criticus*. A fuller list of variants is supplied in Meid's 2015 edition, a critical edition which seeks to reconstruct the archetype of *TBF*.² Meid claims that the archetype dates from 'the late Old Irish or early Middle Irish period preserving, in the main, a text of classical Old Irish'.³ He identifies four independent witnesses to the text (the Book of Leinster; the Yellow Book of Lecan (YBL); Egerton 1782; Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Gaelic XL (Ed)), which can then be divided into two branches with LL and Ed corresponding more closely with one another, and YBL and Eg likewise.⁴ It is important to remember, when making comparisons between *TF* and *TBF*, that the *TF*-author may not have been drawing on the LL-version of *TBF*, or

¹ Shercliff, 'Textual Correspondences', pp. 192–203; included in this thesis for ease of reference as Appendix 2.

² Meid, *Romance of Froech*; see pp. 53–4 for the variants relevant to this passage.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 27–8.

indeed on any extant version. In terms of the *TBF* passages relevant for *TF*, the variation between the manuscripts is in fact minimal, although it might possibly be argued, on the basis of the few variants of significance given below, that *TF* more closely resembles the branch of the tradition represented by Eg and YBL. The version of *DCDM* used here also comes from Eg 1782 (the LL-version of *DCDM* is very different and much shorter). Given that the only major point of correspondence between *TF* and *TBD* in this section is also with the Eg 1782 version, this may be significant.

Mention must also be made of textual correspondences outside §1, which were not discussed in my article. The heavy, almost verbatim borrowing from *TBF* continues into §2, where Findchóem's description of the approaching host closely matches the watchman's description of Fráech's troops.⁵ Similarly the arrival of Maine at Dúnad Geirg is almost identical to Fráech's arrival at Crúachain.⁶ *TF* also contains further textual correspondences, most notably with classical adaptations such as *Togail Troí* (besides the apparent direct borrowing from *LÆ* in §1). These are mentioned in passing in the Textual Notes, but a full discussion of the relationship between *TF* and these texts falls outside the scope of this thesis.⁷ Possible textual correspondences with *TBC-LL* are similarly mentioned in passing.⁸ Also worthy of further study is the relationship between *TF* and *TBD* since, alongside the shared motif of the white, red-eared horse (discussed below), there are parallels between the Otherworldly woman's appearances to Conchobar and Medb in *TF*, and the Otherworldly woman in *TBD* who appears in a number of visions, accompanied by a young man. Of particular relevance are her visitations to Ailill and Corp Liath, whom she prompts into conflict in a manner very similar to the Otherworldly woman in *TF*.⁹

Textual Notes to §1

The start of the tale is missing, due to a lacuna in the manuscript. The text begins in the middle of the description of Maine's second troop, as he prepares to leave Crúachain. Windisch observes that there cannot be much text missing, perhaps only one column.¹⁰ Clearly the description of the first troop is missing, and presumably something to establish the situation whereby Maine wished to woo Ferb. Thurneysen offers further speculation as to what might have been included, suggesting that we might have learned how Maine acquired his splendid equipment: he argues this on the basis of the textual correspondences with *TBF* and *TBD*, in which tales equipment of the same description is a gift from the Otherworld.¹¹ However, it is not necessary to assume that the *TF*-author transposed the situation as well as the descriptions. Thurneysen also suggests that a genealogy of Gerg may have been included,

⁵ *TF*, ll. 47–52; *TBF*, ll. 42–9.

⁶ *TF*, ll. 53–4; *TBF*, ll. 50–3.

⁷ For discussions of various aspects of the interaction between classical adaptations and other medieval Irish texts, see Miles, *Heroic Saga*, and the essays collected in *Classical Literature*, ed. O'Connor.

⁸ See n. to l. 618 for possible evidence of a direct link between *TF* and *TBC-LL*.

⁹ *TBD*, §§9–12; see 'Role of Women', p. 178.

¹⁰ Windisch, 'Tochmarc Ferbe', p. 460.

¹¹ Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden- und Königsage*, p. 354.

since this is given in *Cóir Anmann*, which seems to have taken the description of the *Ól nGúala* from this version of *TF*, and so *TF* may also have been the source of this genealogy; this is again speculation that cannot be proven.¹²

The opening section of *TF* is extremely difficult to interpret; as Windisch notes, ‘der Text unserer Sage ist hier vielfach corrupt’.¹³ Moreover, since it largely comprises a list of different sorts of battle-equipment, identifying what the author meant by such terms is also challenging.¹⁴ To that end, I provide a separate analysis of this section, in order to discuss its interpretation more fully. I will take each problematic sentence in turn, and discuss the meaning of certain words or the reason for emendations. I will also cite the corresponding phrase from *DCDM*, *TBF* or *IAE* where I believe such textual correspondences to be particularly striking, which may assist in the interpretation of the equivalent phrase in *TF* and illustrate how our author may have deviated from what appear to be the sources upon which he drew.

l. 1, *Lénti bāngela co n-esnadaib corcraib iar[na] tóebaib impu.*

cf. *DCDM*, ll. 168–9: *Lēinti lāingela co n-esnathuib corcraib iarma dtāebuib impu.*

esnadaib: eDIL defines *esnaid* as ‘an insertion, inset (of embroidery, inlaid metal, etc.)’.¹⁵ When describing *lénti* (as here), it may be interpreted as ‘an inset of embroidery’, although eDIL also offers the suggestion ‘slashed with crimson’. It might be noted that Windisch’s translation, ‘mit purpurnen Rippen’, suggests that he has interpreted *esnadaib* as a form of *asna* ‘rib’.¹⁶ Due to the MidIr spread of dental-stem endings, this would also be a possible interpretation, although perhaps less likely given the context.

The same word *esnaid* occurs later in this section (ll. 10–11, *carpait fódúirn findruini co n-asnadaib óir 7 argit*; ll. 31–2, *co sciathaib umaidib 7 co n-asnaidib crēdumai foruib*). If we interpret these as *esnaid* as well (as opposed to *asna*), then they would refer to a metal inlay rather than one of embroidery. Other such examples where *esnaid* refers to a metal inlay include: *TBC-LU*, ll. 37–8: *claideb corthaire ... esnaid óir and*; *DCDM*, ll. 128–30: *slegui ... co n-esnadaib óir ocus arccuid ocus credumui ina tāebuib*; *TBF*, ll. 36–8: *scéith co fethul chondúala la cech n-áe, co círbachlaib co n-esnadaib crēdumai íarna tóebaib*.

¹² Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden- und Königsage*, p. 354; see ‘*Ól nGúala*’, p. 162.

¹³ Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, p. 530.

¹⁴ See further discussion of this equipment in the equivalent section in *TBF* in Meid, *Romance of Froech*, pp. 105–27.

¹⁵ eDIL, s.v. *esnaid*.

¹⁶ Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, p. 463.

īar[na]: *īar* lacks the article in the MS, but Windisch suggests emending to *īarna*, based on parallels with *TBF*, ll. 36–8: *scēith co fethul chondúala la cech n-áe, co círbachlaib co n-esnadaib crédumai íarna tóebaib* and *DCDM* cited above (Windisch emends *iarma* to *iar[n]a*).¹⁷

ll. 1–3, *Scēith órbuide co mbilib argit ōengil fora munib co feth[l]aib (7) condūalaib 7 co n-imlib find(d)ruini (7) ro-altnidib*.

cf. *DCDM*, ll. 170–1: *Scēth co fethluib condualae ocus co n-imlib findruini roailtnigib fora muinib*.

fora munib: this seems out of place syntactically in the sentence (cf. the equivalent sentence in *DCDM*). This may have occurred as part of the process of expansion and elaboration which the borrowed phrases in *TF* seem to have undergone.

co feth[l]aib (7) condūalaib: this appears in the MS as *co fethaib 7 condualaib*. Windisch suggests emending this to *co fethlaib condualaib*, i.e. inserting *l* into *fethaib* and omitting 7.¹⁸ The arguments in favour of this are discussed below.

fethlaib: one meaning of *fethal* is ‘a device or ornament on a shield’, meaning that *fethlaib* seems a plausible emendation here. There is no meaning of *feth* or *féth* that would work with a description of a shield (except possibly 4 *féth* ‘smoothness, finish’, although this is not attested in the plural). eDIL suggests a meaning ‘stick, shaft (?)’ for *feth*; however, its evidence is based on Windisch’s edition of the Stowe version of *TBC*: *tri fetha fogera co n-iomdorn orsnath iarna forma*, since Windisch suggests translating this as ‘swords’.¹⁹ This interpretation has been disputed by O’Rahilly, who gives this word as *fedha* and takes it as pl of *fīdh*, used figuratively for sword.²⁰ Although this eDIL entry also cites *TF*, it states that here, ‘*fethlaib* is evidently meant’. Comparison with very similar passages in *TBF*, ll. 36–7: *scēith co fethul chondúala*;²¹ and *DCDM* cited above also support this emendation to *fethlaib*.

condūalaib: as it stands, this appears to be prep *co* + dat pl of *dúal*, ‘lock, plait’. *Dúal* is usually applied to hair but cf. *Reicne Fothaid Canainne*: *criol [c]hetharc[h]uir ... roces de dúalaib derg-óir ... ar is de dual dergóir druin*, where it describes decoration on a ‘four-cornered casket’: Meyer translates *dual dergóir* as ‘coils of red gold’, while eDIL suggests ‘strips of gold pleated’.²² Therefore, *scēith ... co feth[l]aib 7 co ndūalaib* could mean ‘shields ... with ornaments and with coils/plaits’. Alternatively, this could be read as *condúalaib* (taking the 7 preceding it as an error, possibly based on the repeated *co* phrasing of the clause): this would be dat pl of the adjective *condúala*, describing the ‘ornaments’ (*fethlaib*) on the shields. This adjective is often applied to shields (and to other weapons) and is usually

¹⁷ Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, p. 530, n. to l. 2; ‘*De Chophur in Dá Muccida*’, p. 239, n. 5.

¹⁸ Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, p. 530, n. to l. 3.

¹⁹ eDIL, s.v. 2 *feth*; Windisch, *Die altirische Heldensage*, l. 5537.

²⁰ *TBC-St*, l. 4544, see note on p. 192.

²¹ Note that the Eg-version of *TBF* has *fethluib* here and YBL *fethlaib* (Meid, *Romance of Froech*, p. 54).

²² *Reicne Fothaid Canainne* (ed. and transl. Meyer, §§35–6); eDIL, s.v. 2 *dúal*.

translated as ‘scalloped, serrated; ornamented’; cf. *TBDD*, l. 1367: *scéith co faebar condúala foraiþ*;²³ *TBC-LL*, ll. 4321–2: *scíath bémmendach go fáebor chondúala fair*. Particularly significant are the passages in *TBF* and *DCDM* cited above (*scéith co fethul chondúala*; *scēth co fethluib condualae*), which support the emendation of the whole phrase to *co fethlaib condúalaib*. This phrase is likely to be a formulaic description of weaponry, so comparative evidence from generically similar texts is significant. For this reason, I have chosen to emend the phrase, even though *7 co ndūalaib* does also make sense.

ro-altnidib: the MS reading is *noaltneþtha dib*, but *noaltneþtha* does not seem to be a word, so we must presume that an error has been made. Moreover, what seems to be the conjugated preposition *díþ* which follows also does not make sense in this sentence. Windisch suggests *leg. roaltnidib* (intensifying prefix *ro* + *ailtnide* ‘razor-sharp’), on the basis of comparison with *DCDM* cited above.²⁴ For *ailtnide* in another shield context, cf. *TBC-LU*, ll. 2233–4: *chromsciath ... cona bil áithgéir ailtidhi imgéir*. For other weapon contexts, cf. *Foglaím Con Culainn*: *slegh ... 7 a rinn áithgher ailtnidhe*;²⁵ *CCath*, l. 5343: *claidme ... ailtnidhi*; *TBC-LU*, l. 383: *ná rind bas áighthidiu ná bas altnidi*. The emendation is supported by the close textual correspondences with the parallel passage from *DCDM*. The preceding *7* could again have arisen from a later misunderstanding error.

Note that, although Windisch’s reading is *nealt-*, based on Facs., it is possible that this should be read as *noalt-*. The MS is very faded here and the *e/o* and *a* are very close together. Although there does seem to be a stroke across the letter in the digital image (this is less clear in the physical manuscript), it does not look like other *e*’s in the MS, which have a horizontal stroke (see *eltaib* in the line below). If this is to be read as *noalt-*, this would further support Windisch’s emendation, since *r > n* is a common error.

Image of TCD 1339, p. 253a5–6 removed for copyright reasons. Copyright holder is The Board of Trinity College Dublin.

²³ Although note that Knott (*Togail Bruidne Da Derga*, p. 110) actually interprets this as gen sg of the noun *condúail* (not in eDIL).

²⁴ Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, p. 530, n. to l. 4.

²⁵ *Foglaím Con Culainn* (ed. Stokes, §4).

Windisch observes that there is a contradiction in *TF*, since the shields' rims (*bil*) or borders (*imbel*) cannot be made of both silver and white bronze.²⁶ In *DCDM*, only *imlib* is given; in *TBF* the rims/borders of the shields are not mentioned. Possibly what we are seeing here is the expansion of this description in *TF* over time, adding further details.

l. 3, *Claidib debennacha mōra co n-eltaib dét co n-imduirnib airgidib fora cressaib*.

cf. e.g. *TBDD*, ll. 1305–6, *claideb co n-imdurn dét*; *TBC-LL*, l. 159, *claideb ... co n-imdurnaib argit*; *TBC-LL*, ll. 4322 and 4394 *claideb co n-eltaib dét*.

This sentence does not have a direct parallel in either *TBF* or *DCDM*; however, such phrases are still highly formulaic and are attested in texts such as those given above.²⁷ Windisch suggests that *co n-eltaib dét co n-imduirnib airgidib* is another example of tautology, as with the description of the shields, providing two formulaic descriptions of the same part of the sword.²⁸ However, the eDIL definitions for *elta* and *imdorn* suggest that these are actually two different parts of the sword, the crossguards and the hilt respectively.²⁹ Meanwhile, the *benn* in *debennacha* refers to the peak or top of the sword-hilt.

ll. 3–4, *Dā maelgaī i llāim cech fīr dīb co semmannaib argait*.

cf. *DCDM*, ll. 172–3: *Moēlgaē hi llāimh gach fīr dīb gu semmannuib airccit*.

maelgaī: *mael* 'blunt' seems a strange epithet for a spear (even though eDIL's suggested translation is '(blunt-headed?) spear or javelin'), but it nevertheless seems to refer to a particular type of weapon.³⁰ In the case of *maelchircul* (l. 9, below), I suggest a meaning 'rounded' which might also work here, i.e. 'round-headed'. Note that the compound *maelassa* occurs later in *TF* (l. 94), and here 'round-toed' seems an appropriate translation.

l. 4, *Baí dano torachta di ór forloiscthi im cech gaī dīb*.

cf. *DCDM*, ll. 173–4: *Coēco toracht di ór forloisct[h]i im gach n-aī*.

torachta: *torachta* / *toracht* is an adjective, participle of *do-roich*, but it can also be used as a substantive: 'circularity, roundness'. Here and later in the section (ll. 19–20, *torochta d'ór forloiscthi im cech gaī dīb*), *torachta* seems to be functioning as a substantive, seeing as it is followed by *di ór*. It is found in similar contexts in *TBF*, ll. 23–4: *coíca toracht di ór forloiscthi im cech n-áe*; and *DCDM*

²⁶ Windisch, 'Tochmarc Ferbe', p. 530, n. to l. 4.

²⁷ See Shercliff, 'Textual Correspondences', pp. 190–2.

²⁸ Windisch, 'Tochmarc Ferbe', p. 530, n. to l. 4.

²⁹ eDIL, s.v. 2 *elta*; *imdorn*.

³⁰ eDIL, s.v. 1 *mael*.

cited above, both also describing spears. In these examples, the form is *toracht*, apparently gen pl of *toracht* (an alternative nom sg form to *torachta*); however, in *TF*, the form is nom sg *torachta*.

ll. 4–5, *Nī bátar assai imma cossaib nā celbair imma cennaib*.

cf. *DCDM*, ll. 174–5: *Ni battar iallaiccraind impu nā cenbair imo gcennuip*.

ll. 6–7, *Coīca ech dergdond seta sithméti inti, 7 coīca ech find n-oíderg. It é scūaplebra ĩarna rusiud i corcair uile .i. a scópa 7 a moṅga*.

cf. *TBD*, §4: *Caeco ech finn n-ouderg ate scuaiblipra, ruissi hi corccuir huili a scuabo 7 a mungo*.

This is the only phrase from this section which seems to have a direct textual correspondence with *TBD*, most closely with the Eg-version (given above). The white, red-eared horses are striking here, since although the motif of the white, red-eared cow is frequently attested in early Irish literature, ranging from saints' Lives to saga texts,³¹ the white, red-eared horse appears to be unique to these two texts.³²

dergdond: according to eDIL, *donn* means 'chestnut' when applied to animals,³³ so I presume that *dergdonn* means something similar.

seta sithméti: *seta* means 'long', as does *sith-*, while *méit* means 'greatness', so literally this means 'long horses of long greatness'. I follow eDIL's suggested translation for this phrase: 'of great length and size'.³⁴

rusiud: this seems to be the verbal noun of *ruisid*, for which eDIL offers the suggested translation 'reddens, stains red'.³⁵ The only other attestation is fut 3sg, in *Echtra mac nEchach Muigmedóin*: *rusfith ria re tuir*.³⁶ Since the horses' tails are said to be 'reddened in *corcair*', I have chosen to translate *corcair* as 'crimson' in this section, even though it can also be used for 'purple'.

ll. 7–8, *Sréin dēlīnecha friu, .i. bolga dergóir isind ara līniu 7 bolga airgit ōengil isin līne aile*.

dergóir: I give the traditional translation of 'red-gold' for *dergór*. There have been studies which attempt to identify what such materials might originally have been; for example, Etchingham and Swift argue that '*dergór* could signify a de-silvering process, in which the gold was kept at a red

³¹ Bergin, 'White Red-Eared Cows'; Bray, 'Further on White Red-Eared Cows'.

³² See Shercliff, 'Textual Correspondences', pp. 194–5.

³³ eDIL, s.v. *donn*.

³⁴ eDIL, s.v. *méit*.

³⁵ eDIL, s.v. *ruisid*.

³⁶ *Echtra mac nEchach Muigmedóin* (ed. Stokes, §3).

heat, insufficient to melt it but adequate for separating out any silver'.³⁷ However, I would argue that, in a late literary text such as *TF*, such precious metals or jewels were considered simply as a recognised part of these well-established formulae describing high-status clothing and weapons, and authors no longer gave much thought to their physical realities. For this reason, I have kept the traditional translations of such materials, which arguably convey a similar sense of familiarity to a modern scholarly audience as that evoked for the audience of these medieval texts.

ll. 8–9, *Belgi óir 7 argit friu uile. Maelchircul óir co clucīnib fo brāgit cech eich díb.*

cf. *TBF*, ll. 27–8: *Beilge óir friu. Máelland arggait co clucīniu óir fo brāgit cech eich.*

maelchircul: *circul* means ‘circle’ and can refer to a type of ornament, possibly a circular disc; *mael* generally means ‘bald’ or ‘blunt’. *Mael* is found in a similar compound *maelland*, combined with *lann* ‘lamina, ornamental plate’. In both cases, *mael* possibly refers to a rounded (so ‘blunt’?) surface. *Máelland* is found in the equivalent place in *TBF*: due to the textual correspondences between the tales, it is likely that a similar ornament is meant in both cases.

ll. 9–10, *Ba binnithir téta mendchrott oca senmair i lláim súad fogur na clucīn sin, ica foglūasacht dona echaib ina cémmennaib.*

mendchrott: there has been some debate about the meaning of the *mend* prefixed to *crott* ‘harp’: Stokes and Meyer explain it as ‘kid-harp’;³⁸ Windisch suggests an original *bendchrot* (?‘peaked harp’) but later withdraws the suggestion;³⁹ eDIL suggests *menn* ‘clear (of sounds)’.⁴⁰ However, this word is only found in gen pl in heroic and poetic literature in stereotyped similes (e.g. *Sanas Cormaic*: *caisidir carra mennc[h]rot*;⁴¹ *TBC-LL*, ll. 4339–40: *binnither lim ra fogor mendchrott i llámaib súad*), often preceded by *téta* ‘strings’ as in *TF* here (e.g. *TBDD*, ll. 189 and 607; *TBC-LL*, l. 191; *CCath*, l. 4710; *Measgra Dánta*; *Cóir Anmann*).⁴² Therefore, whatever the origins of this word, it is clear that authors were using it to mean simply ‘harp’, and so I will translate it as such. Indeed, an example from *Buile Shuibhne* (*re tédaibh míne mennchrot*) suggests that, even if the name of the harp was originally formed using an adjective *menn*, this was seemingly forgotten by this stage as it is found alongside an adjective *mín* with a similar meaning to *menn*.⁴³

³⁷ Etchingham and Swift, ‘English and Pictish Terms for Brooch’, p. 37; see also Vendryes, ‘Notes critiques sur des textes’, p. 314; Scott, ‘Goldworking Terms’, pp. 246–7, n. 13.

³⁸ Stokes, ‘*In Cath Catharda*’, p. 529; Meyer, ‘Bibliographie’, p. 121.

³⁹ Windisch, *Die altirische Heldensage*, p. 29, n. 4: ‘die ursprüngliche Form ist *bendchrot*, das *m* im Anlaut beruht nur auf weiterer Uebertragung der Eklipse’; p. 742, n. 3: ‘in Bezug auf das *m* von *mendchrott* geäußerte Vermuthung nehme ich zurück’.

⁴⁰ eDIL, s.v. *mennchrott*.

⁴¹ *Sanas Cormaic* (ed. Meyer, §1059).

⁴² *Measgra Dánta* (ed. O’Rahilly, p. 25); *CA* (ed. Arbuthnot, II, §80).

⁴³ *Buile Shuibhne* (ed. O’Keeffe, l. 885).

This is an example of where our author has expanded on the phrase taken from *TBF*, drawing on another formulaic phrase to elaborate his description. The frequent occurrence of this simile is exemplified in the examples given above.

ll. 10–11, *Carpait foduirn findruini co n-asnadaib óir 7 argit eter cech dā n-ech díb-side*.

foduirn: Windisch suggests that *foduirn* is a metathesis of *fo-druin*, based on the adjective *dron* ‘solid, firm’.⁴⁴ However, *foduirn* is attested in one other text, *Cathcharpat Serda*: *carput féig foduirn fethamail findruine*, where O’Rahilly translates it as ‘strong’ (with no comment).⁴⁵ Given this second attestation, it seems possible that *foduirn* is simply a little-attested adjective meaning something like ‘sturdy’.

findruini: I give the traditional translation of ‘white bronze’ for *findruine*; see discussion under *dergór*, pp. 91–2. According to Hull, this may actually have been electrum or electron, a by-product from the smelting of gold and silver.⁴⁶ In value it was ranked below gold (*ór*, *dergór*) and above bronze (*créduma*).⁴⁷

ll. 11–13, *Coīca sadall corcra co snáthib argit estib i ceñgul do chrettaib na carpat 7 co síblaib óir estib immach, dar borddaib na carpat, co cendmílaib inġantachaib foruib*.

cf. *TBF*, ll. 28–30: *Coīca acrañ corcra co snáthib argait estib, co síblaib óir 7 argait 7 co cendmílaib*.

sadall: eDIL defines *sadall* as ‘horse-saddle, caparison’, a caparison being a cloth covering the saddle or harness of a horse.⁴⁸ It is therefore surprising that here the *sadall* are found on the chariots rather than the horses, but perhaps we must understand *sadall* as referring more generally to trappings associated with horses.

estib: the preposition *a* usually means ‘out of’, but the meaning ‘attached to, composed of, in’ is also listed in eDIL.⁴⁹ In the case of *snáthib* ‘in’ makes the most sense, while with *síblaib* ‘attached to them’ makes the most sense.

immach: this usually means ‘outwards’ but this does not work in this context, as it seems to be generally found with verbs of motion.⁵⁰ It can also mean ‘besides’, which would fit the context better here, as it is describing an additional detail. According to eDIL, this is usually found in the phrase *ó sin immach*, but there are some examples of *immach* on its own.

⁴⁴ Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, p. 530, n. to l. 17.

⁴⁵ *Cathcharpat Serda* (ed. O’Rahilly, p. 196).

⁴⁶ Hull, ‘Early Irish Find(b)ruine’, pp. 100–101; but cf. also Meid, *Romance of Froech*, pp. 111–12.

⁴⁷ Mallory, ‘Silver in the Ulster Cycle’, pp. 32–8.

⁴⁸ eDIL, s.v. *sadall*.

⁴⁹ eDIL, s.v. *7 a*, III (a).

⁵⁰ eDIL, s.v. *immach*.

cendmílaib: *cendmíl* is found in almost identical contexts in *TF* and *TBF* (illustrated above). In these texts it either refers to a type of decoration on the buckles (*síblaib*) or something (either decoration or type of ornament) on the caparisons/saddle-cloths (*sadall/acrann*). *Cendmíl* is also found in *IÆ*, ll. 1562–4: *Rorinta and dono delba 7 fuath na n-arm 7 na luirech 7 na sciath 7 na cloidim 7 na soighetbholg 7 cendmíla tucsat a coscar catha*. The context here suggests that these were objects rather than types of decoration, since they are included among the spoils of war. In other texts, *cendmíl* is used as a positive epithet to describe a person: cf. *TF*, l. 250: *ba hé a cendmíl airechta 7 a lám thairberta sét 7 a sodomna rí*; *Colum Cilli dorinne an ochtfoclach sa sí*: *Ísa Críst costadha, / in coimdi cumachtach, / in cennmíl cumdachta*;⁵¹ *Dlegaidh rí a ríarugud*: *Ní ba hard nó ordnidhi, ní ba súi salm gach sétach / ní ba cendmíl muinntiri / nech nach fulaing a hécnach*.⁵²

It seems generally accepted that *cendmíl* is a compound formed from *cenn* ‘head’ + *míl* ‘animal’.⁵³ Other possibilities for the meaning of *míl* have been suggested. For example, Stokes suggests that there may have been a word *míl* meaning ‘brooch’;⁵⁴ however, two other compounds with *míl* ‘animal’ are attested (*fiadmíl* ‘wild animal’; *bledmíl* ‘sea-monster’, lit. ‘whale-animal’), so perhaps this is unnecessary, especially as the type of ornament referred to cannot be a brooch in certain contexts (for instance, in *TBDD* it is found on a shield – see below). For the second *TF* citation (l. 250), Windisch suggests the translation ‘Hauptkrieger’, presumably interpreting the compound as *cenn* ‘chief’ + *míl* ‘soldier’.⁵⁵ However, this would only work for those citations where *cendmíl* is singular, as in the plural it is never given as a dental stem in its extant attestations. Incidentally, these instances coincide with where *cendmíl* is used to describe people, where ‘chief soldier’ works well (this obviously does not work where an object is referred to). On the other hand, it is unlikely that two such homonymic compounds would have been in circulation, especially as in *TF* this would mean each use would then have a different meaning. Additionally, see above on the occurrence of several *míl* ‘animal’ compounds. Therefore, ‘head-animal’ seems the most likely translation of the compound.

If we accept this translation of *cendmíl*, an interpretation which would fit both contexts (object and epithet) is that *cendmíl* refers to a type of ornament which incorporates animal-headed decoration, which then became generalised to mean ‘ornament’ and so was used as a metaphor in positive epithets. Although ‘head-animal’ does not explicitly indicate that an ornament is referred to, this would fit all contexts discussed above, and is further supported by the existence of the compound (*s*)*túagmíl* ((*s*)*túag* ‘arch, curve’), which similarly seems to be an ornament which incorporates animal design; cf. *TBF*, ll. 19–20: *lénti bángela co túagmílaib óir*; *TBDD*, ll. 10–11: *túagmíla ingantai di ór 7 airget for bruindi 7 a formnaib*; *TBDD*, ll. 939–40: *trí dubscéith co stúagmílaib óir* (*túag-* in other MSS). Taken together, these compounds suggest that there were at least two types of ornament which were referred to by their

⁵¹ *Colum Cilli dorinne an ochtfoclach sa sí* (ed. Meyer, §28).

⁵² *Dlegaidh rí a ríarugud* (ed. Meyer, §17).

⁵³ See Meid, *Táin Bó Fraích*, p. 22; Calder, *Imtheachta Æniasa*, p. 206.

⁵⁴ Stokes, ‘*In Cath Catharda*’, p. 562.

⁵⁵ Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, p. 487.

style of decoration: incorporating animal heads (*cendmíl* ‘head-animal’) and incorporating animal interlace (*túagmíl* ‘curve-animal’).

co cendmílaib ingantachaib foraib: while the LL-version of *TBF* simply has *co cendmílaib* here, it should be noted that the Eg-version has *co cendmílaib oir ingantaib foruib* and the YBL-version *co cendmílaib ingantaib foraib impu*, so that this may also support the view that the *TF*-author’s model belonged to this branch of the *TBF* tradition.⁵⁶

The sentence under discussion here is long and convoluted, and it is difficult to determine quite what is being described. There is a definite textual correspondence with *TBF*, where the description is shorter. In *TBF* it is clear that all details introduced by *co* refer back to the decorations on the saddle-cloths: they are decorated with silver threads, gold and silver buckles, and animal-headed ornaments. The *TF* description contains these same three elements, but each has been expanded with further detail. However, given the textual correspondence with *TBF*, it seems likely that all three elements were still thought to be decorations on the caparisons. Windisch suggests that *i ceñgul do chrettaib na carpat* and *dar borddaib na carpat* have been incorporated into *TF* from glosses, since they are not attested in *TBF*.⁵⁷ Certainly here we seem to have another example of the *TF*-author expanding on his source text.

l. 13, *Coíca gilla n-óc n-aigfind n-imlebur isin choícait charput sin*.

aigfind: eDIL’s suggested translation for this compound is ‘white-faced’: *aig* (shortening of *aiged* ‘face’) + *finn*.⁵⁸ However, firstly there are no other examples of compounds with *aiged* that use this shortening: all others use the full form of the word (*agedchain* etc.).⁵⁹ Moreover, while some examples support this interpretation (cf. this *TF* citation; *TBC-LL*, ll. 3706–7: *dá óclach aigfinna abratgorma móra*; *Connachta* (poem): *tri chét da chrud cach elgga / ‘s íat aigfinda óidergga* (description of cattle: ‘white-faced, red-eared’)),⁶⁰ others are more problematic. In *TBC* from H.2.17, it is used to describe Cú Chulainn’s hair: *mac ... caega n-urla n-abaidhe n-aighinn ... on cluais go ceile do*.⁶¹ In *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne*, it is used to describe a bridle made of salt: *cona srīan sechtairdech do saland [d]agfind fris* – Meyer’s suggestions are either *leg. dagfhind* (‘good-white (?)’), or *aig-fhind* ‘as white as ice’.⁶² *Aigfinn* also occurs in *In Tenga Bithnua*: *mil mbeannachl. ar .ccc. adharc n-egfhind asa cind sair*. In Stokes’ edition, he analyses *egfhind* as ‘face-white’, i.e. ‘white-faced’, but this

⁵⁶ Meid, *Romance of Froech*, p. 53.

⁵⁷ Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, p. 531, n. to l. 18.

⁵⁸ eDIL, s.v. *aigfind*.

⁵⁹ eDIL, s.v. *agad*.

⁶⁰ *Connachta* (Diplom., l. 3257).

⁶¹ *TBC* from H.2.17 (ed. Thurneysen, p. 539).

⁶² *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne* (ed. Meyer, p. 122; glossary, p. 156).

seems a strange description of horns.⁶³ In Carey's edition, he translates it as 'shining like ice', resembling Meyer's interpretation, which seems the most plausible suggestion.⁶⁴

ll. 13–14, & *nī baí nech díb acht mac rí 7 rīgna 7 curad 7 cathmīled do Chonnachtaib*.

cf. *DCDM*, l. 119: *Nicon-buī ann acht mic rīg ocus rīgno*.

Aside from the white, red-eared horse motif which is paralleled in *TBD*, this is the only place in the description of the third troop where a phrase can be traced to a text other than *TBF*. Note that this phrase seems to have been taken from a different set-piece in *DCDM* to the borrowings for the second troop. The *TF*-author displays his characteristic tendency towards expansion by adding *7 curad 7 cathmīled*.

ll. 14–15, *Coíca brat corcra cortharach impu co cortharaib ecair óir 7 argit*.

cf. e.g. *TBC-LU*, ll. 3821–2: *brat corcra cortharach*; *IAE*, l. 1930: *brat corcra corrrthorach*.

l. 15, *Cethri óa umaídi ar cech brut. Mílech do dergór fôrloiscthi in cech brut*.

cf. *TBF*, ll. 18–19: *Cethéora oa dubglassa for cech brutt, 7 mílech derggóir la cech mbratt*.

óa: the MS reading is *ora*. As it stands, this might mean 'border, hem (of a garment)', as an extension of *or* 'boundary, edge, border'. However, *or* is a masc o-stem and so nom pl would be *oir* not *ora* (although there might have been a misunderstanding of the class of noun, or a MidIr development of the plural form). This word is found in a similar context to *TF* (with *brat*) in *TBC-St*, ll. 4505–6, although here in dat pl: *brat ... fo oraib corcra* (but note that the word looks like *?craib* in some MSS). It is also found in dat pl in *Tochmarc Treblainne*: *dá mháelasa co n-oraibh órdha*, describing sandals – although here the word might actually be *fora* 'clasp'.⁶⁵ *Fora* might also be the word intended in *TF*, although a cloak with four clasps is perhaps unlikely.

Another suggestion is *leg. óa*, nom pl of *ó* 'angle, tip, corner of quadrangular garment'.⁶⁶ This word is also found in a similar context to *TF*; cf. *Serglige Con Culainn*: *delg óir ... i n-óe cecha breclenni*;⁶⁷ *Longes Chonaill Chuiric*: *con-accai side oi dia brutt forsin t-snechtu* (the wearer is nearly buried in snow);⁶⁸ *TBF*, ll. 18–9: *cethéora oa dubglassa for cech brutt*.

⁶³ *In Tenga Bithnua* (ed. and transl. Stokes, p. 120).

⁶⁴ *In Tenga Bithnua* (ed. and transl. Carey, p. 163).

⁶⁵ *Tochmarc Treblainne* (ed. Meyer, p. 170).

⁶⁶ Windisch, 'Tochmarc Ferbe', p. 531, n. to l. 24.

⁶⁷ *Serglige Con Culainn* (ed. Dillon, ll. 508–9).

⁶⁸ *Longes Chonaill Chuiric* (ed. Hull, p. 940).

It is clear that the word *ó* was problematic for scribes – there is also possible confusion with *óra* in *Fled Bricrend*: *brat corcra ... cona ceothoraib oraib* [*leg. óaib?*] *óir fair*, where the use of ‘four’ possibly supports ‘corners’ rather than borders.⁶⁹ Equally there is sometimes confusion with *eó* ‘brooch’; cf. *DCCDM*, ll. 120–1: *cet[h]re heō corcra for gach brut*; *Two Deaths*: *gebuid eó do chochuill ... gabuis ói a cochuill* (Marstrander translates this as ‘brooch’ but ‘corner’ might work better in this context of a beast leading a monk through the desert).⁷⁰ I conclude that *óa* works best in the *TF* context. Even though ‘borders’ does make sense, the noun ending is wrong and there are several examples which show that this word found with ‘four’ tends to mean ‘corner’. Moreover, the fact that *TBF* gives *oa* provides additional support for reading the same word here, given the strong textual correspondences between the two texts. The examples also show that this word seems to have been problematic for scribes, so it would not be surprising if the *TF*-scribe had also made an error.

ll. 15–16, *Lēnti srebnaidi sítai co tūagnadmannaib di ór bruthi buide i custul fria ñgelchnessaib*.

cf. *TBF*, ll. 19–20: *Lēnti bángela co túagmílaib óir impu*.

tūagnadmannaib: eDIL translates *túagnaidm* as ‘a metal fastening or buckle’.⁷¹ Windisch suggests these might be some sort of ‘Hakenverschlüssen’, which makes sense from the elements of the compound: *túag* ‘arch, curve, hoop’ + (*s*)*naidm* ‘bond’.⁷²

i custul fria ñgelchnessaib: the meaning of *custal* is uncertain and it is almost always found in this formation with *i*. eDIL suggests a link with *cust* but the meaning of this word is also uncertain.⁷³ O’Clery’s glossary states: *cust .i. croiceann* (‘hide, skin’), but as this is a late text (seventeenth-century), this might be a back-formation from *custal*.⁷⁴ The phrase *i custul* is most frequently found in association with descriptions of garments, as it is in *TF*. This may be seen in *TBC*, where variations on the same phrase are found in both recensions: *TBC-LU*, ll. 2094–5: *léne ... fo dergindliud do dergór i custul fri gelcnes go glúnib dó*; *TBC-LL*, l. 4405: *léni chulpatach i caustal gá fórnib dó*; *TBC-LL*, ll. 4315–16: *léni donderg míleta ba dergindliud do dergór frí[a] gelcnes i caustal go glúnib dó*; *TBC-YBL*, l. 3250: *léne culpatach co ndergindled imbi i custul*.

The phrase *i custul fri (gel)cnes* which recurs above may be found in certain other texts: cf. *MU*, ll. 605–6 and 747–8: *trí lénti ... i caustul fri cnessaib dóib*; *léni ... i caustul fri cnes dó*; *CCath*, ll. 4670–1: *ro gab tonaigh ... i custal a gelcnis dó*; *Buile Shuibhne*: *léine ... i cusdul frí gheilchnes dó*.⁷⁵ I would conclude that *i custul* as used here in *TF* means ‘next to’. eDIL suggests ‘held in, trussed,

⁶⁹ *Fled Bricrend* (ed. Windisch, p. 177).

⁷⁰ *Two Deaths* (ed. Marstrander, ll. 15–17).

⁷¹ eDIL, s.v. *túagnaidm*.

⁷² Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, p. 465.

⁷³ eDIL, s.v. *custal*.

⁷⁴ O’Clery’s *Irish Glossary*, A–G (ed. Miller, p. 395).

⁷⁵ *Buile Shuibhne* (ed. O’Keefe, ll. 126–7).

wrapped tightly or perhaps simply fitted, arranged’, but I do not think the evidence necessarily implies a tightly-fitted garment.

ll. 16–17, *Coíca cathscíath n-airgdide cona timchiull d’ór, 7 co mbreccad gemm carrmocoil 7 lec lógmar cech datha, for muinib leo.*

cf. *TBF*, ll. 20–1: *Coíca scíath n-argdide co n-imlib óir impu.*

timchiull: *timchell* is the verbal noun of *do-imchella* ‘surrounds’, and means ‘act of going around; circuit, circumference, boundary’. Although ‘circumference of gold’ does not make sense in English, this clearly means that the shields had gold around their whole circumference. This is supported by the comparison with the relevant phrase describing the shields from *TBF*: *co n-imlib óir*.

carrmocoil: I give the traditional translation of ‘carbuncle’ here; see discussion under *dergór*, pp. 91–2. Whitfield suggests that *carmocol* may refer to imitation *cloisonné* work which was produced in Ireland using red glass instead of garnets.⁷⁶

ll. 17–18, *Dā chaindill gaiscid di ślegaib cóicrinnechaib i lláim cech fīr díb.*

cf. *TBF*, ll. 21–2: *Caindel ríghigi i lláim cech áe.*

chaindill: although this literally means ‘candle’ it can be used figuratively or metaphorically as ‘shining light’ to describe both people and weapons. It is often used as an epithet for a spear in the phrase *caindell ríghaige* (‘candle of a king’s house’); cf. *TBF* cited above;⁷⁷ *TBDD*, ll. 882–3: *cúicroth óir 7 caindel ríghaighi úas cach ae*; *TBC-LL*, l. 4317: *caindell ríghaige ‘na láim*. In all these examples, *caindell* is used as a metaphor for ‘spear’; however, the context in *TF*, although clearly similar, is nevertheless different in that the *dā chaindill* are described as *di ślegaib*, rather than just being equated with the spear. Moreover, all the other examples featuring spears use the expression *caindell ríghaige*, but in *TF* we have *dā chaindill gaiscid*. One might suggest that *dā chaindill* refers to the spear-points, except that there are two *chaindill* while the spears are *cóicrinnechaib*.

The role of *gaiscid* in this phrase is also puzzling. *Gaisced* means ‘weapons, armour; valour, prowess’, so this is either a ‘candle of weapons’ or a ‘candle of valour’, perhaps taking ‘candle’ figuratively to mean ‘a shining light’, even ‘gleam, flash’ (?). I conclude that *caindell* in *TF* should be treated differently to the other examples cited. *Caindell gaiscid*, taken as ‘gleams of valour’, might be a similar idea to Cú Chulainn’s *lúan láith* (‘hero’s light’),⁷⁸ or it might be something more literal, if

⁷⁶ Whitfield, ‘*Carmocol*’.

⁷⁷ Note that YBL seems to have made an addition to rationalise this expression: *oengai cruadach mor i soillsithir rigchaindell rigtaigi* (Meid, *Romance of Froech*, p. 31).

⁷⁸ *TBC-LU*, l. 2272.

taken as ‘two flashes of weapons’, such as a description of the flashing metal as the spears catch the light.

cech fîr dîb: it will be noted that in the equivalent places in *TBF*, the expression *cech áe* is preferred to *TF*’s *cech fîr dîb*. However, at this point in the Eg-version of *TBF*, the MS gives *cech fîr*, while YBL gives *cech fîr dîb*, possibly supporting the argument that the *TF*-author was using a version of *TBF* belonging to this branch of the tradition.⁷⁹

ll. 18–19, *Coíca semmand d’[f]indruini 7 d’ór in cech gaī dîb. Cīa no dlestá míach óir do cech fîr dîb, no ícfad seim gaī cech fîr dîb é.*

cf. *TBF*, l. 22: *Coíca semmand findruine ar cech n-áe.*

This is another example where the *TF*-author has given additional detail to expand on the object described in *TBF*. As stated earlier, this extra sentence is found verbatim in the Eg-version of *TF*, which adds a degree of complexity to the issue of the relationship between the LL-prose and Eg-prose.⁸⁰

ll. 19–20, *Torochta d’ór forloiscthi im cech gaī dîb.*

cf. *TBF*, ll. 22–3: *Coíca toracht di ór forloiscthi im cech n-áe.*

torochta: see the discussion of *toracht*, pp. 90–1. Here I give the parallel with *TBF* whereas above I gave *DCDM* because, although the phrases are essentially the same in both *DCDM* and *TBF*, it seems likely that the *TF*-author imported each phrase separately, in the context of his borrowing from *DCDM* for the second troop and *TBF* for the third troop.⁸¹ This can be seen from the ordering of the phrases in the description for each troop, which is identical to *DCDM* for the second troop (ll. 172–5: *Moēlgaē hi llāimh gach fîr dîb gu semmannuib airccit. Coēco toracht di ór forloisct[h]i im gach n-aī. Ni battar iallaiccraind impu nā cenbair imo gcennuip*) and *TBF* for the third troop (ll. 22–26: *Coíca semmand findruine ar cech n-áe. Coíca toracht di ór forloiscthi im cech n-áe. Eirmitiuda do charrmocul fóib anís, 7 is di lecaib lógmairib a n-airiarn. No lastais in aidche amal betís ruithni grēni.*

ll. 20–1, *Irthōcbáil dano do charmoclaib fóthib uile conna n-ilbreccad di gemmaib lógmaraib. No lastais trá i n-aidchi amal ruthni grēni.*

cf. *TBF*, ll. 23–6: *Eirmitiuda do charrmocul fóib anís, 7 is di lecaib lógmairib a n-airiarn. No lastais in aidche amal betís ruithni grēni.*

⁷⁹ Meid, *Romance of Froech*, p. 53.

⁸⁰ See ‘Textual Tradition’, p. 7.

⁸¹ See Shercliff, ‘Textual Correspondences’, pp. 193–4.

irthócbáil: *airthócbáil* is the verbal noun of *ar-tócaib* ‘raises’, and means ‘the act of raising’, but also ‘raised ornament’. The equivalent word in *TBF* is *eirmitiuda*, and Meid states that *airmtiud* refers to the spur or point on the bottom side of the lance.⁸² This would explain the use of the conjugated preposition *fóib* (*TF*: *fóthib*), referring to the spears, since the *eirmitiuda* would be attached to the underside of the spears. Based on the textual correspondence between the two texts at this point, it may be assumed that *irthócbáil* refers to the same part of the spear.

ll. 21–2, *Coíca claideb n-órduirn n-intlaisse co n-eltaib déit ecoir óir 7 argit, i trūallib fichthib finnargit fora cressaib dóib*.

cf. *TBF*, l. 26: *Coíca claideb n-órduirn leo*.

intlaise: eDIL is uncertain of this word’s meaning but suggests ‘of the ornament on weapons and war-gear, reins, garments, shoes, brooches: inlaid?, ornamented with inlaid work?, with insertion?’.⁸³ Other citations of this word indicate that it is associated with *claideb* (most commonly, as in *TF*), *delg* and *léine*; cf. e.g. *Scéla Alaxandair*: *clóidib órduirnd imm faebraib ínntlaisi*;⁸⁴ *TBC-YBL*, ll. 2039–40: *delc findruine ... arna necor d’ór indtlaise*; *Siaburcharpat Con Culaind*: *léni ... co nderginluth intlase*.⁸⁵

fichthib: *figthe* (participle of *figid*) means ‘woven, intertwined’, and is often found alongside (or confused with) *fíthe* (participle of *fenaid*) which means essentially the same. It can be used to describe how a house is made (cf. *TBDD*, l. 80: *teach fichi*), and also the plaiting of hair (cf. *Death of Absalom*: *dochuiredar a moing im géscá ... ar is figthi robúi*).⁸⁶ It may be found describing metal in *TBC-LL*, ll. 4449–50: *gormanart ... go stúagaib fíthi figthi féta findruini*, where the metal seems to be physically woven together; and in *TBC-LU*, ll. 2717–18: *claideb ... hi trúaill fichthi fíthe findarcait*, translated by O’Rahilly as: ‘a sword ... in a sheath with interlaced design of bright silver’, suggesting that it might also refer to a type of decoration. In *TF*, it is unclear whether it describes the way the sheath is made (from woven metal) or how it is decorated (with interlace design) – the latter is perhaps more likely.

ll. 22–3, *Coíca echlasc findruini co mbaccánaib óir ina lāmaib*.

cf. *TBF*, l. 30: *Coíca echlasc findruine co mbaccán órda*.

⁸² Meid, *Romance of Froech*, p. 112; see also Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, p. 532, n. to ll. 32–6.

⁸³ eDIL, s.v. *intla(i)sse* ?.

⁸⁴ *Scéla Alaxandair* (ed. Meyer, ll. 12–13).

⁸⁵ *Siaburcharpat Con Culaind* (ed. Best and Bergin, ll. 9267–8).

⁸⁶ *Death of Absalom* (ed. Meyer, ll. 24–5).

l. 24, *Ba cēmālaind ĩarum 7 ba cruthach in maccōem baí eturru. Is é leccanfōta lānsolus drechlethan.*
cf. *IAE*, l. 1924: *Ba cruthach an maccaem robai etarru.*

lānsolus: *lán* literally means ‘full’, but here it seems to be functioning as a simple intensifier, in a manner similar to *fír* ‘true’; cf. also *TF*, l. 258: *trīcha lēch lánchalma.*

l. 25, *Folt fochas ōrbuide fírlebor fair co sniged co brainni a imda.*

cf. *IAE*, ll. 1924–5: *Mong fhocos orbhuidhi fair.*

co brainni a imda: *imdae* means ‘shoulder, shoulder-blade’, and in medieval Irish texts hair is frequently said to reach the *imdae*.⁸⁷ The expression *co brainni a imda* is also found in *TBDD*, ll. 879–80: *tacmainc in mong órbuidi doib co braine a n-imdae*. *Brainni* may be a form of *braine* ‘projection’, in which case *braine a imda* would be ‘the projection of his shoulders’, i.e. the shoulder-blades (?), which is eDIL’s suggestion.⁸⁸ However, *braine* is also confused with *bruinne* ‘front, edge’, in which case this would be ‘the front of his shoulders’. In either case, the image is clearly that of hair falling to the shoulders.

ll. 25–6, *Rosc n-airard n-adanta is ē gorm glainidi ina chind.*

cf. *IAE*, l. 1925: *Rosc gorm glainidi ina chind.*

airard: eDIL defines *airard* as ‘very high, tall’, but since *ard* includes ‘noble’ in its meanings, this could mean ‘very noble’ instead.⁸⁹ *Airard* is found in a very similar context in *TBC-LL*, l. 4438: *rosc mbrecht n-urard ina chind*. O’Rahilly translates this as ‘an eye of many colours high in his head’. However, while *urard ina chind* might be interpreted as a phrase ‘high in his head’ in the *TBC* context, in *TF* the words *airard* and *ina chind* are located at opposite ends of the sentence, suggesting that they were not viewed as forming a single phrase here. For this reason, I suggest the translation ‘very noble’ for *airard* in the *TF* context (this would also work in *TBC*).

ll. 26–7, *Ba cosmail fri cléithe caille cētamain nó fri sīan slébi cehtar a dā gruad. Andar latt ba fross do nēmanneruib ro-laad ina chend.*

cf. *IAE*, ll. 1925–8: *Ba cosmail ri forcleithi cailli cetemuin no fri sian slebi cehtar a dha gruadh. Anddar lat ba fras do nemandaib rolad ina ceand.*

⁸⁷ eDIL, s.v. 3 *imdae*.

⁸⁸ eDIL, s.v. 1 *braine*.

⁸⁹ eDIL, s.v. *airard*.

Such similes are highly formulaic and recur frequently: cf. e.g. *TBDD*, ll. 19–25: *Batar dergithir sían slébe na dá grúad ... batar inand 7 frais do némannaib a déta ina cind* (Étaín); *TBC-LU*, l. 35: *Indar lat ba fross do némannaib boí inna bélaib* (Fedelm). The selection and ordering of the similes found in both *TF* and *IÆ* is what makes this textual correspondence particularly striking and suggests direct borrowing.⁹⁰

nēmannaib: note that *Diplom.* gives this as *-aib*, but this is not how I read the MS.⁹¹ This seems to be *-uib* for the dat pl ending *-aib*, due to MidIr falling-together of unstressed vowels.

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l. 27, *Andar latt bátar dā dúal partaingi a bēoil*.

cf. *IÆ*, l. 1928: *Anddar lat ba dual partlaingi a beoil*.

dúal partaingi: the use of *partaing* in heroic literature as a comparison for red lips is extremely common; cf. e.g. *Siaburcharpat Con Chulaind*: *deirgithir partaing a beoil*;⁹² *TBDD*, ll. 24–5: *batar dergithir partaing na beóil*; description of Fedelm in *TBC-LU*, ll. 34–5: *indar latt ropo di partaing imdéntai a beóil*, and *TBC-LL*, ll. 190–1: *cosmail do núapartaing a beóil*. In the past editors have sometimes translated it as ‘rowan-berries’ or ‘coral’. In fact, the word seems to have been derived from Lat. *parthicus* (‘leather dyed scarlet-red, prepared by the Parthians’).⁹³ In any case it seems likely that writers attached no very definite signification to the word beyond that of colour. Nevertheless, there is some evidence that a concept of *partaing* as meaning ‘leather’ (or something similar) did remain, since in *TBF*, ll. 91–2, it is used to describe the decoration on a bag: *crottbolg di chrocnib doborchon cona n-imdénam do phartaing*.

The meaning of *dúal* here is more problematic. *Dúal* usually means ‘lock of hair; plait, fold’, but I can find no discussion of what it might mean in conjunction with *partaing*, even though this expression seems fairly common in such similes (cf. e.g. *Siaburcharpat Con Chulaind* (from Egerton 88): *dergithir dual partaing*).⁹⁴ It is found in *Scél na Fír Flatha*: *dar-let ba dual partaingi a bhél*, which Stokes translates in the traditional manner as ‘a cluster of rowan-berries’ (although eDIL suggests ‘a leash of scarlet leather’).⁹⁵ It is also found in *IÆ* (given above), which Calder translates as ‘a loop of

⁹⁰ See Shercliff, ‘Textual Correspondences’, pp. 197–201.

⁹¹ *Diplom.*, l. 33489.

⁹² *Siaburcharpat Con Culaind* (ed. Best and Bergin, l. 9273).

⁹³ eDIL, s.v. *partaing*; see Stokes, ‘Irish Ordeals’, p. 222; Windisch, *Die altirische Heldensage*, p. 28, n. 3; Meid, *Táin Bó Fraích*, p. 29.

⁹⁴ *Siaburcharpat Con Chulaind* (ed. Meyer, p. 50).

⁹⁵ *Scél na Fír Flatha* (ed. Stokes, §3).

coral (lit. Parthian red)'. I would draw attention to the use of *dúal* to mean 'strip, strand'; cf. *Reicne Fothaid Canainne*: *criol [c]hetharc[h]uir ... roces de dúalaib derg-óir ... ar is de dual dergóir druin*, where eDIL's suggested translation is 'strips of gold pleated' (see discussion under *condūalaib*, p. 88).⁹⁶ Therefore, my suggested translation here would be 'two strips/strands of red leather'.

ll. 27–8, *Ba gilithir snechta ōenaidchi a brági 7 a chnes chena*.

cf. *IÆ*, ll. 1928–9: *Ba gilithir ri sneachta n-aen aidchi a braigi 7 a cneas ar cheana*.

Such similes are highly formulaic and recur frequently: cf. e.g. *TTr*, l. 32341: *gilidir snechta n-oenaidche* (Hector); *TBDD*, ll. 19–25: *Batar gilithir sneachta n-oenaidche na dí dóit* (Étaín); *TBC-LL*, ll. 192–3: *Gilidir snechta sniged fri ōenaidchi taídlech a cniss* (Fedelm).

ll. 28–30, *Secht mīlc[h]oin imma charpat i slabradaib argit, 7 ubull óir for cech slabraid combá leór ceōl fogur na n-ubull frisna slabradaib. Noco rabi dath nā rabi isna conaib bátar aice*.

cf. *TBF*, ll. 31–33: *Secht mīlchoin i slabradaib argait, 7 ubull n-óir eter cech n-áe ... Noco rabi dath nád beth intib*.

ll. 30–1, *Mórfeisiur cornaire co cornaib óir 7 argit leo co n-ētaigib illdathaib impu co mongaib fin[n]buide foraiib*.

cf. *TBF*, ll. 33–5: *Mórfesser cornaire leo co cornaib órdaib 7 argdidib, co n-ētaigib ildathachaib, co mongaib órdaib sídbudib*.

fin[n]buide: although the LL-version of *TBF* has *sídbudib* here, the Eg-version has *finnbude* (and YBL *findb-*), which corresponds more closely with *TF*.⁹⁷

ll. 31–2, *Bátar trī druí rempu co mindaib airgidib ūasa cennaib co mbrattaib breccaib impu, & co scīathaib umaidib 7 co n-asnaidib crēdumai foraiib*.

cf. *TBF*, ll. 35–6: *Bátir tri drúith remib co mindaib argdidib*.

druí: It might be noted that *TF* differs from the LL-version of *TBF*, which has *tri drúith* 'three jesters'. Meid notes that the *TBF* MSS fluctuate between *drúith* and *druid*, so the word intended might originally have been 'jesters' or 'druids'; also *druith* can be nom pl of *druí*.⁹⁸ Meid argues that this is more likely to be 'jesters' from the context, since they are named alongside horn-players and harpists

⁹⁶ *Reicne Fothaid Canainne* (ed. Meyer, §§35–6); eDIL, s.v. 2 *dúal*.

⁹⁷ Meid, *Romance of Froech*, p. 53.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

in *TBF*, and jesters and horn-players are also found together in *Fled Bricrenn 7 Loinges mac nDuíl Dermait: na cornnairi 7 na drúith*.⁹⁹ Similarly, it seems likely that *druith* was intended in *Tochmarc Emire: a chornairi ... a thrí druíd dénma glám ngér*.¹⁰⁰ On the other hand, I would point out that in both *TF* and *TBF* the *druí(th)* are said to be wearing crowns, which possibly makes ‘druids’ the more likely interpretation. Whatever the original intention, it should be noted that the Eg-version of *TBF* has *druid* here, so that again we have *TF* and the Eg-version of *TBF* arguably more closely in agreement.¹⁰¹ As eDIL observes, the word *druí* ‘druid’ (dental stem) was confused with the word *drúth* ‘jester’;¹⁰² cf. *Cath Cairn Chonaill: tánic in drúth ... i n-uch[t] in druad*;¹⁰³ *Temair III: do drúithib, do doirseóirib*, in some MSS found alongside *furseoirib* ‘clowns’;¹⁰⁴ *Senchas Síil Ír: coic meic Druith Cosalaig* but *tres mac in druad*.¹⁰⁵ Clearly the same confusion has occurred among the MSS of *TBF*; however, the *TF*-author’s spelling of *druí* makes it fairly clear that he understood this word as ‘druid’.

ll. 32–3, *Trí cruittiri co n-écosc rīgda for cech ā ina comair i mbrattaib corcraib*.

cf. *TBF*, ll. 38–9: *Triar cruittire co n-écosc rīg im cech n-áe*.

Textual Notes to Sections 2–16

§1. Description of Maine’s troops

For textual notes to Section 1, see p. 86 ff.

§2. Arrival at Dúnad Geirg

l. 34, *ro fersat a trí graiphni oenaig*: it is uncertain whether the word intended is *graifne* (iā-stem) or *grafand* (ā-stem), since due to the falling-together of unstressed vowels in Middle Irish, *graiphni* could be intended for acc pl of either word (iā -i, ā -a); in any case, both mean ‘horse-race’. This meaning seems rather incongruous in this situation but it may be presumed to refer to some sort of performance to show off the troops. The association between the horse-race and the fair or assembly (*oenach*) is well-attested; cf. *Fled Bricrend: iar cor graphand doib i n-óenach na Cruachna*;¹⁰⁶ *Cath Boinde: cor cuiread graifne in aenaich leo*.¹⁰⁷ *Grafand* also includes within its meanings ‘noise, tumult’,

⁹⁹ *Fled Bricrenn 7 Loinges mac nDuíl Dermait* (ed. Hollo, §26 and note on p. 86).

¹⁰⁰ *Tochmarc Emire* (ed. van Hamel, p. 68).

¹⁰¹ Meid, *Romance of Froech*, p. 54.

¹⁰² eDIL, s.v. *druí*.

¹⁰³ *Cath Cairn Chonaill* (ed. Stokes, §37).

¹⁰⁴ *Temair III* (ed. Gwynn, l. 178).

¹⁰⁵ *Senchas Síil Ír* (ed. Dobbs, p. 350).

¹⁰⁶ *Fled Bricrend* (ed. Windisch, §66).

¹⁰⁷ *Cath Boinde* (ed. O’Neill, p. 178).

so that this passage might refer to ‘three shouts of assembly’. However, this meaning is only attested in *Saltair na Rann*: *firfid graphainn gergaile, amal choire forfichud; Crist caid conic cach ngraphainn*,¹⁰⁸ while the meaning ‘horse-race’ is much more widely attested and is also found elsewhere with almost exactly the same wording as here; cf. *Finn and the Phantoms*: *rofthersat tri graffne glana*,¹⁰⁹ *Betha Colmáin*: *rognísitt .iii. grafne óenaich dó*,¹¹⁰ *Imram Curaig Maíldúin*: *feraiset grafaind*.¹¹¹

l. 35, *tāgait ... i cend séta 7 imthechta*: here we have two phrases meaning ‘set out’: *téit i cend séta* ‘go on the head of the path’; *téit imthecht* ‘go journeying’.

l. 36, *Rātha Ini*: this is where Gerg’s fort is located. The location of *Ráth Ini* has not been identified: Hogan simply draws on *TF*.¹¹² He concludes that it must be ‘near Cruachu in Connacht’, but in fact it is in Ulster, since Bricriu comments that Maine will be *i cūiciud Chonchobair*, while Gerg tells Maine: *Lēic-siu etruind féin innar n-Ultaib*.¹¹³

l. 37, *Bricriu*: here Bricriu takes the usual role of troublemaker with which he is associated in other Ulster Cycle tales such as *Fled Bricrend*. Windisch observes that in *TF* Bricriu is with Ailill and Medb in Crúachain although in other tales like *Fled Bricrend* he is with Conchobar at Emain Macha.¹¹⁴ In §9, Bricriu makes a brief reappearance, again in the role of troublemaker, almost seeming to delight in contradicting other characters’ decisions.

l. 39, *rúathur*: other occurrences of this word suggest that it means ‘onrush, onset, attack’; e.g. *TBC-LL*, l. 4456: *rúathur rátha*; *CCath*, l. 5793: *in ruathar ... ruccsat i cenn na caithetarnaidhe*; *Buile Shuibhne*: *gan rúathar ... gan airgni*.¹¹⁵ However, all of these examples involve an aggressive context, which is not the case here. Perhaps Bricriu is using it ironically to mean ‘a quick visit’, as in a raid.

Since we are lacking the opening of this tale, which would presumably have explained why Maine was setting out, his full motivations are not entirely clear. Bricriu and Maine use the word *feis* to describe the visit, which can mean ‘feast’ but also ‘spending the night’, including in a conjugal sense, which supports the ostensible reason of completing a marriage alliance with Ferb.¹¹⁶ However, the use of *rúathar* to describe the journey seems to complicate the issue, especially as Maine is venturing into enemy territory. Dunn’s observation that the narrative structure of *TF* more closely resembles that of a *táin* than that of a *tochmarc*, according to his definition, may be relevant to this issue, given that *rúathar* was felt to be an appropriate description of Maine’s activities.¹¹⁷

¹⁰⁸ *Saltair na Rann* (ed. Stokes, ll. 8203–4 and 8222).

¹⁰⁹ *Finn and the Phantoms* (ed. Stokes, §13).

¹¹⁰ *Betha Colmáin* (ed. Meyer, §84).

¹¹¹ *Imram Curaig Maíldúin* (ed. Oskamp, p. 112).

¹¹² Hogan, *Onomasticon*, p. 573.

¹¹³ *TF*, ll. 39 and 175: ‘in the province of Conchobar’; ‘Leave us Ulstermen [to settle it] among ourselves’.

¹¹⁴ Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, p. 532, n. to l. 58.

¹¹⁵ *Buile Shuibhne* (ed. O’Keeffe, ll. 372 and 374).

¹¹⁶ eDIL, s.v. 2 *feis(s)*.

¹¹⁷ Dunn, *Cattle-Raids and Courtships*, p. 91.

l. 39, *Chonchobair*: I have expanded Conchobar's name to the spelling *-ar* in this text, since although it is almost invariably given in abbreviation, on the rare occasions that it is given in full in the LL-prose (p. 254^a, l. 43; p. 256^a, l. 12), this is the spelling used.

l. 42, *fiamuchráid*: this looks like two separate words in the MS and this is how Diplom. transcribes it; however, this is only a later scribe's interpretation and word division is not a sure guide.¹¹⁸ It is perhaps more likely to be a compound of the adjective *fiamach* 'dark, hidden' + *rád* (verbal noun of *ráidid* 'speaks'), meaning something like 'speaking darkly or ambiguously'.

Certainly this dialogue could be characterised as 'dark' or 'obscure', since it is layered with veiled taunts, posturing and quick retorts. Bricriu's opening statement (*Is caín tíachtai[n] chetus. Ní fétar in ba caín ticfaithi*) seems to be an insinuation that, although Maine's arrival (*tíachtain*) at Crúachain looks impressive, his return may not be so triumphant.¹¹⁹ Maine's cryptic response inverts Bricriu's language, seeming to assert that there must first be *dul* ('a going') in order to find this out, i.e. they will not know how his return will look unless he goes first. The language of both is laden with uncertainty: *ní fétar, dīa fiastar*. Then there is the ambiguity of Bricriu's use of the word *rúathur* (see above). This scene is also imbued with tragic irony, since Maine's visit does turn into an 'attack', while he is not able to complete his feast of three days and indeed does not return to Crúachain.

ll. 43–57: note the alliteration in this passage: *do bethi barrālaind barrglas 7 essair ūrard úrlūachra; ferthair fīrchāin fáilti friu, & do-gnūther gríthgretha do glanfóthrucud dóib; airigthi airerda*. Long runs of alliterating nouns and adjectives are characteristic of the literary style of MidIr texts.¹²⁰

l. 43, *bé thastil*: there are various examples of [person] + *taistel* to denote 'messenger', but the others are masculine. *Fer taistel*,¹²¹ *céile taistel*¹²² and *gilla taistel*¹²³ all feature in relation to legal material, as servants/vassals in a household – they have all been interpreted as something like 'messenger'. Their rights are assessed in relation to their lord, although it is not always clear how closely they are associated with him (*fer taistel* is found alongside a son but also foreigners and jesters; *céile taistel* is placed with others who have a degree of separation in their relationship, e.g. stepbrother, nephew). Their status is also not clear (the context for *gilla taistel* suggests that he was lower than a groom of fixed wages, although still high enough to be mentioned in the tract). In *TBC-LL*, ll. 133–4, *aes n-imthechta nó tastil sliged* are equated with *echlacha*, seemingly a synonym for messenger. *Aes taistel* and *céile taistel* are gender-neutral terms.

TF is the only example I have found where the specific term *bé thastil* appears. However, women do act as messengers and go-betweens in other medieval Irish texts (such as *AnS*). In *Cath*

¹¹⁸ Diplom., l. 33507.

¹¹⁹ *TF*, l. 37: '[Your] coming looks well to begin with. I do not know whether it will look as well when you return'.

¹²⁰ Mac Gearailt, 'On Textual Correspondences', p. 347.

¹²¹ *Di Chethairshlicht Athgabálae* (*CIH* 382.18); see Kelly, *Guide*, p. 66, n. 209.

¹²² *Sanas Cormaic* (ed. Meyer, §532).

¹²³ *Di Choimét Dligthech* (*CIH* 1369.14).

Boinde, the equivalent term *bain-eachlach* ‘female messenger’ is used, while in *Talland Étair*, Leborcham is described simply as *hechlaige* (cf. n. to l. 416).¹²⁴

ll. 43–4, *ro ésráit(a) tigi*: it is uncertain whether this should be written as *ro ésráita tigi* (Diplom.) or *ro ésráit a tigi* (Windisch).¹²⁵ In either case, this must be a perf passive pl form, with either *-ta* for *-tha*, or the MidIr ending *-ait* (with a hair stroke on the *i*), thus either: ‘houses were scattered’ or ‘their houses were scattered’. If this is *ro ésráita*, it would be a form of *esréidid* ‘scatters, spreads’, of which *esrói-* / *esraí-* was a variant stem.¹²⁶ However, there is a similar phrase in *MU* (ll. 916–7) which has the perf passive sg form of the related verb *esraid*, and also gives the poss pron 3pl: *Ro hesrad a tech di cholcthib 7 brothrachaib*. Comparison with this phrase suggests that in *TF* we may have the perf passive pl form of *esraid* + poss pron 3pl.

l. 44, *essair úrard úrlúachra*: eDIL proposes ‘fresh and tall’ as the translation of the compound *úrard*, which suggests that it considers it to be a preposed adjective describing *úrlúachra* (‘rushes’).¹²⁷ However, it would be more usual for an adjective to follow the noun it describes, and since *úrard* follows *essair* (‘litter’), then ‘fresh and tall’ is a less likely translation if we assume that *essair* is being described. *Ard*, which usually means ‘high’, is the problematic element (since a litter cannot be ‘high’). There is one instance where *ard* possibly means ‘deep’, with reference to the sea, although this meaning appears rare (*Irish Grammatical Tracts: cathair slúaign do airg d’fóiléim / a ngoibéil chúain aird ainiúil*)¹²⁸ – so *úrard* might mean ‘fresh and deep’, particularly since with relation to a litter this would incorporate the meaning ‘raised above the ground’ also associated with *ard*. Alternatively, *úrard* could be a variant form of *airard* ‘very high, tall’, in which case it might be translated here as ‘very noble’ as in l. 25, although there spelt *airard*. On balance, I think it is more likely that the first element *úr* was intended as the adjective *úr* ‘fresh’, rather than as a variant spelling of *air-*, since *úr* is repeated in the following word *úrlúachra* and this is an alliterative sentence (cf. the repetition of the first element in the preceding phrase: *barrālaind barrglas*); also the Facs. gives a length mark here so, although this is no longer visible, it may have been present and since faded. Therefore, I will translate this as ‘fresh and deep’.

l. 44, *Erb*: this is an orthographical variant of *Ferb* which presumably arose from cases where the *f* of *Ferb* was lenited and so not pronounced (cf. also l. 98, *la hEirb*).

The name *Ferb* is of interest since it has three meanings: ‘cow’, ‘blister (raised by satire)’ and ‘word’. These are enumerated in OGSMS (in Dublin, Trinity College 1337 (H.3.18)), glossing the legal tract *Di Chethairshlicht Athgabálae*, which seems to have been the source for the same ‘triad’ attested

¹²⁴ *Cath Boinde* (ed. O’Neill, p. 178); *Talland Étair* (ed. Ó Dónaill, l. 129).

¹²⁵ Diplom., l. 33509; Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, l. 65.

¹²⁶ Watkins, ‘Old-Irish *Sernaid*’, pp. 93–5.

¹²⁷ eDIL, s.v. 2 *úr*.

¹²⁸ *Irish Grammatical Tracts* (ed. Bergin, p. 63).

in *Sanas Cormaic* and commentaries to *Amra Choluim Chille*.¹²⁹ In addition, it should be noted that the commentary to the *Amra* in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawlinson B502 contains an intriguing quatrain illustrating the meaning ‘word’: *Isat doss edind frit chlod. / ni chelim dar mo debrod, a fir a glind gerg co ngail. / gnath ferb is olcc dart belaib*.¹³⁰ Although this seems to bear no relation to the *TF* story, it is possible that this quatrain provided the inspiration for the connection between the names Ferb and Gerg in our tale. It is striking that one meaning of Ferb’s name is ‘word’, since she is primarily characterised in *TF* by the space devoted to her speech.¹³¹ The meaning ‘cow’ is also noteworthy, given *TF*’s possible correspondences with *TBD*, since the heroine of *TBD* is named Dartaid, which means ‘heifer’.

l. 45, *nīrbo chīan ém dī-si ón*: literally this means ‘indeed that was not long for her’; however, it is ambiguous as to whether this means ‘it did not take Findchóem long’ or ‘Ferb did not have to wait long’.

ll. 50–2, *cech cless ... fon cumma sin*: the almost verbatim textual correspondence between *TF* and *TBF* for this passage has already been noted.¹³² However, it should also be observed that, although not verbatim, Cú Chulain performs a similar feat in *TBC-LL*: *Dobered béim din chammán dá liathróit co mbered band fota úad. No theilged dano a chammán arís d’athbéim cona berad níba lugu andá in cétband. No thelged a chlettín 7 no sneded a bunsai 7 no bered rith baíse ‘na ndíaid. No gebed dano a chammán 7 no geibed a liathróit 7 no geibed a chlettíne 7 ní roiched bun a bunsai 7 lár tráth congebed a barr etarla etarbúas*.¹³³

l. 52, *eturru*: for the interpretation of this form as *eter* + pron 3sg f, referring to *bunsach*, see ‘Linguistic Notes’, p. 26.

l. 54, *innund*: as an adverb of place, *innonn* usually means ‘yonder, over, to that side’. However, frequently in this text (ll. 178, 183, 315), it seems to have the meaning ‘inside’ instead.

l. 55, *do-gnūther gríthgretha do glanfóthrucud dóib*: this phrase is problematic. *Gretha* seems to be acc pl, presumably with a nominative *grith*. The meaning of *gretha* is uncertain; Hogan suggests ‘baths’,¹³⁴ while Stokes suggests ‘preparations’.¹³⁵ There are two other instances of this phrase which are very similar: *CRR*, §24: *doronait gretha glanfóthraicthi leo*; *Aided Guill 7 Gairb*: *dorónait gretha*

¹²⁹ Qiu, ‘Wandering Cows’, pp. 102–3; Russell, ‘*In aliis libris*’, pp. 78–92.

¹³⁰ Russell, ‘*In aliis libris*’, pp. 79 and 81: ‘You are as difficult to keep down as an ivy-bush, / I conceal it not, by my *débród*. / O valorous man of Glenn Gerg, / usual is an evil word on your lips’.

¹³¹ See ‘Role of Women’, p. 190.

¹³² See ‘Textual Correspondences’, p. 86.

¹³³ *TBC-LL*, ll. 761–766: ‘He would strike his ball with the stick and drive it a long way from him. Then with a second stroke he would throw his stick so that he might drive it a distance no less than the first. He would throw his javelin and he would cast his spear and would make a playful rush after them. Then he would catch his hurley-stick and his ball and his javelin, and before the end of his spear had reached the ground he would catch its tip aloft in the air’.

¹³⁴ Hogan, *Cath Ruis na Ríg*, p. 33.

¹³⁵ Stokes, ‘Violent Deaths’, p. 444. Windisch’s translation indicates that he also takes *grith* as ‘preparation’ (having suggested omitting *gretha*): ‘Vorbereitung ... zu einem reinen Bade’ (*Tochmarc Ferbe*, p. 469).

glan-fothraicthe dóib.¹³⁶ However, it will be observed that in these examples, unlike in *TF* (which has *gríth gretha*), only the word *gretha* occurs, so that *gretha glanfothraicthe* must mean either ‘baths of clean-washing’ or ‘preparations of clean-washing’. Thus it seems clear that we are only dealing with one word *gríth*, meaning either ‘bath’ or ‘preparation’, not two separate words which are homonyms, as the *TF* example might lead us to conclude (thereby translating *gríth gretha* as ‘preparations of a bath’).

Leaving *gríth* to one side for now, it must then be decided whether *gretha* means ‘baths’ or ‘preparations’. eDIL suggests some examples which might support the meaning ‘preparations’,¹³⁷ namely *Félire Óengusso: líth fris cuirter grethae*;¹³⁸ *Triads of Ireland: trí gretha tige degláich: gríth fodla, gríth suide, gríth coméirge*.¹³⁹ However, although ‘preparations’ does work in the *Félire Óengusso* context, this word could equally be *1 gríth* ‘shout, din, uproar’. Meanwhile, *gretha* is highly unlikely to mean ‘preparations’ in the *Triads* context, since Triad 97 just before this is *trí fuiric* (‘three preparations’) and so ‘shout’ also works best here. Therefore, these two examples actually seem to be a different word *1 gríth*, meaning ‘shout’, so that they cannot be used as evidence for *gretha* with the meaning ‘preparations’. Meanwhile, there may be a stronger argument in support of the meaning ‘bath’, on the basis of an example from *CCath* (ll. 5219–20) where only this meaning seems plausible: *no foibrigti ... a grethaib gleorda glanusci* (in the context of tempering armour). Therefore, I would suggest that *gretha* (nom sg *gríth*) means ‘baths’, not ‘preparations’, in *TF*, *CRR* and *Aided Guill 7 Gairg*.

Meanwhile, a case might be made for omitting *gríth* as an error.¹⁴⁰ On the other hand, the separate word *1 gríth* ‘shout, din, uproar’ (discussed above) might have been intended in this context: eDIL suggests a compound *gríth-gretha* ‘noisy baths’ (i.e. bubbling).¹⁴¹ *1 gríth* also includes within its meanings ‘shaking, vibration, agitation’, which might equally be taken as a reference to ‘bubbling’.

ll. 55–6, *ar comair drechi in dūnaid*: this is another example of tautology, since *ar comair* and *ar dreich* as phrases both mean ‘in front of’ (as with l. 35, *tīagait ... i cend séta 7 imthechta*).

l. 56, *airigthi airerda ...*: in the MS there is a short word (3–5 letters?) following *airerda*, now illegible. It is likely to be another adjective describing *airigthi*, probably alliterating with *airerda*, since this is an alliterative passage. Examples of alliterating adjectives found alongside *airerda* elsewhere include *Fís Adamnáin: flaith úasal adamra ærerda*;¹⁴² *Bórama: taige ardda airerda / cruaidi 7 comnarta*.¹⁴³ Either of these would work in this context.

¹³⁶ *Aided Guill 7 Gairb* (ed. Stokes, §30).

¹³⁷ eDIL, s.v. ?4 *gríth*.

¹³⁸ *Félire Óengusso* (ed. Stokes, Jan. §25).

¹³⁹ *Triads of Ireland* (ed. Meyer, §99).

¹⁴⁰ Windisch suggests omitting *gretha*, as he takes *gríth* as the sg form of the same word (‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, p. 533); however, the other examples suggest that *gretha* was the more common usage and so I would suggest omitting *gríth* if a word was to be omitted.

¹⁴¹ eDIL, s.v. ?*gretha*.

¹⁴² *Fís Adamnáin* (ed. Windisch, §35).

¹⁴³ *Bórama* (Diplom., ll. 38120–1).

§3. Druid's prophecy

l. 58, *gaíthi géri galbigi*: Windisch notes that a similar omen features in *TTr*², l. 851: *fogur gáeithe gére gailbighe*.¹⁴⁴

l. 62, *Ollgæth*: Maine's druid seems to be one of a number of additional characters invented by the author of the LL-prose.¹⁴⁵ His name means 'great wind', an appropriate name for a character whose main role is to interpret the meaning of the omen of the terrible wind that sweeps through Dúnad Geirg.

l. 65, *glónáthi airchetail*: the meaning of *glósnáithe* is difficult to ascertain here.¹⁴⁶ This same word *glónáthi* also occurs at the end of *TF*: Conchobar tells his poet *co ndernad glónāthe airchetail co cummair do chumnigud in scéoil sin*.¹⁴⁷

Glósnáithe is used in a figurative sense to gloss Lat. *filum* 'thread' (i.e. of speech/narrative) and *norma* 'model, pattern'; it is also used figuratively elsewhere: e.g. *Bethu Phátraic*: *It é so ferta atchúidetar sruithi Heirenn 7 dosratat fo glo[s]nathi n-aisnesen*;¹⁴⁸ *Passions and Homilies*: *cindimm díb ... glónshnáthi ernaigthe cumbri do denum* – Jesus on the composition of the Lord's Prayer ('a model of short prayer').¹⁴⁹ Windisch translates *glónáthi airchetail* as 'ein Mustergedicht' in both contexts in *TF*.¹⁵⁰ It seems unlikely that the two poems, Poem I and the LL-poem, would be described as 'model poems' in the sense of something worth copying, since there is nothing that particularly sets them apart as better than any of the other poems in the text (except that Poem I has an unusual metre while the LL-poem is unusually long). However, if we take 'model' more in the sense of 'outline', then this might be relevant to both poems, since they do both set out the outline of events, Poem I as a prophecy and the LL-poem presented as a summary composed after events had taken place. This may be what Lambert intends when he translates *glónáthi airchetail* from l. 633 as 'brief poetical resumé' (he does not address the earlier instance of the word in *TF*), although note that 'brief' comes from *co cummair* in this passage.¹⁵¹ Therefore, one might translate *glónáthi airchetail* as something like 'outline-poem', meaning a poem that narrates the outline of events.

On the other hand, Lambert also offers 'poetical composition' as a translation for *glónáthi airchetail*, drawing a parallel with occurrences of *glonsnathi filidhechta*,¹⁵² *tre glosnaithe fileta*,¹⁵³ *tre glosnaithe filedh* and *tre glosnaithe ealadhna*.¹⁵⁴ Therefore, it may be that *glósnáithe* came to lose its more specific meanings of 'thread; model' and became more generally 'composition', at least in relation

¹⁴⁴ Windisch, 'Tochmarc Ferbe', p. 533, n. to l. 89.

¹⁴⁵ See 'Textual Tradition', pp. 9–10.

¹⁴⁶ See discussion by Lambert, 'Old Irish *Gláosnáithe*'.

¹⁴⁷ *TF*, ll. 632–3: 'to make a poetical composition to commemorate that tale in summary'.

¹⁴⁸ *Bethu Phátraic* (ed. Mulchrone, ll. 634–5).

¹⁴⁹ *Passions and Homilies* (ed. Atkinson, l. 7857).

¹⁵⁰ Windisch, 'Tochmarc Ferbe', pp. 471 and 519.

¹⁵¹ Lambert, 'Old Irish *Gláosnáithe*', p. 235.

¹⁵² *Ancient Laws of Ireland III* (ed. O'Mahony and Richey, p. 88); given as *glonsnathi filed* in *CIH* 251.2.

¹⁵³ *Airec Menman Uraird maic Coisse* (ed. Byrne, §1).

¹⁵⁴ *Betha Máedóc Ferna II* (ed. Plummer, §206).

to poetry. Nevertheless, in the context of both *TF* citations, it seems likely that the concept of ‘outline-poem’ remained, although this is hard to render into English.

For notes to Poem I, see ‘Textual Notes to the Verse’, p. 130.

l. 86, *fómsa*: this might be prep *fo* + pron 1sg + emphasising pron, ‘under, subject to me’, i.e. follow my advice. Alternatively, it might be a form of *foimsiu* ‘calculating (beforehand), taking due measure or precautions’: this fits the sense here, but this word has few attestations and none have this form.

§4. Otherworldly woman visits Conchobar

l. 92, *Etanchaithrech*: this epithet means ‘having furze-like body-hair’: *etain*, a corrupted form of *aittenn* ‘furze, gorse’ + *caithrech*, adjective from *caithir* ‘body-hair’; cf. Meyer’s note on the description of Conla as *cen caither*, ‘literally “without the hair of pubescence” ... Hence also the female name *Aittenchaithrech*, “fuzzy-haired”, sometimes corrupted into *Etan-chaithrech*’.¹⁵⁵ This epithet is also applied to Mugain in *Fled Bricrend*: *Mugain Aitencætrech*,¹⁵⁶ *Aided Lógairi Búadaig*: *Mughain Aitinchairchech* [sic];¹⁵⁷ *Ferchuitred Medba*: *Mumain Aitencathrach*.¹⁵⁸ It can also be applied to other women: e.g. *Serglige Con Culainn*: *Ethne Aitencháithrech*.¹⁵⁹

l. 93, *cūacris*: *cúach* can mean either ‘fastener for cloak, hair etc.’ or ‘lock of hair, tress, hair’; *cris* usually means ‘girdle, belt’, but essentially refers to anything that encircles (also swaddling clothes, hoops, zodiac). *Cúacris* clearly refers to something that can be wrapped around the head to tie one’s hair up (Windisch translates it as ‘Strähnengürtel’).¹⁶⁰ If *cúach* means ‘hair’, *cúacris* would mean ‘hair-band’; if it means ‘fastener’, it would mean something like ‘wrap-around fastener’ (i.e. for hair).

l. 93, *sretha*: one meaning of *sreth* is ‘row, line, series, arrangement, order’, which includes ‘of ornamentation on garments etc.’; cf. *Baile in Scáil*: *brat co srethaib di ór*, for which eDIL suggests ‘stripes, lines, edgings (?)’ – Murray translates this as ‘edged with gold’.¹⁶¹ No garment is mentioned in *TF*, but it must be implied. *Sreth* is also used for the ornamentation of other objects; cf. *Dun Crimthand*: *tri nóí gem carrmocail choir, / ba foir ’na sreith ara lár* (of a brooch);¹⁶² *Scéla Alaxandair*: *roindfithí fúdbai feínded fo shrethaib óir* (of armour).¹⁶³

¹⁵⁵ Meyer, ‘The Death of Conla’, p. 117, n. *b*.

¹⁵⁶ *Fled Bricrend* (ed. Windisch, §28).

¹⁵⁷ *Aided Lógairi Búadaig* (ed. Meyer, p. 22).

¹⁵⁸ *Ferchuitred Medba* (ed. Meyer, l. 15).

¹⁵⁹ *Serglige Con Culainn* (ed. Dillon, l. 27).

¹⁶⁰ Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, p. 473.

¹⁶¹ *Baile in Scáil* (ed. and transl. Murray, l. 33); eDIL, s.v. *sreth* II (c).

¹⁶² *Dun Crimthand* (ed. Gwynn, ll. 39–40).

¹⁶³ *Scéla Alaxandair* (ed. Meyer, l. 229).

II. 93–4, *bláthmīn máeth*: *maeth* means ‘soft’ while both *mīn* and *bláith* mean ‘smooth, soft’. All three may be found in various combinations; cf. *CCath*, I. 4692: *cona dib caelspeltib blathmaetha biannaide* (of a sword-case of skin); *Félire Húi Gormáin*: *blaithmīn fri boctaib*.¹⁶⁴

There is also a word *bláth* that means ‘flower; fig. bright colour’, and possibly ‘sheen’ in one instance; cf. *Advice to a Prince*: *bláth bruinne bran*.¹⁶⁵ Thus it is possible that *bláthmīn* might mean ‘smooth and brightly-coloured / smooth-sheened’. However, *bláith* ‘smooth, soft’ is more likely, given its frequent association with these other adjectives (as exemplified above), and also because this compound recurs again in the next sentence, describing the woman’s skin.

For notes to Poem II, see ‘Textual Notes to the Verse’, p. 132.

I. 127, *commaidim*: this word seems to contain the prefix *com-* which originally meant ‘mutually’, but appears in late compounds as a mere intensive prefix. This word might be *commáidem* ‘act of exulting in, celebrating; defeating, triumph, victory’, *com-* + *moídem* (‘boasting’, verbal noun of *moídid*); cf. *Fled Bricrend*: *gáir commaidmi ocus búada*,¹⁶⁶ *TBC-LL*, I. 1655: *co rucur-sa do chend-su 7 do choscúir [7] do chommaídim*; *Cath Maige Rath*: *gur ab do bodein commaidem*.¹⁶⁷ Certainly this seems to be the word intended later in *TF*: *ro lá a ulaig commaídmí*.¹⁶⁸

eDIL also contains a word *commaidm*, *com-* + *maidm* (‘breaking; defeat’), which is translated as ‘heartbreak’,¹⁶⁹ based on one example from the Prose *Dindshenchas*, *Sruthar Matha*: *commaidm críde* ‘heartbreak’, about the scent of mast.¹⁷⁰ If this word is *com-* + *maidm*, it could be translated as ‘complete conquest’, which would work in the *dindshenchas* example (‘a complete overcoming of the heart’) and in this *TF* context. However, since there is only one example of *commaidm* in eDIL, it seems more likely that this is actually another example of *commáidem*, which would also make sense in the *dindshenchas* example, i.e. ‘heart-defeat’. The meanings for *commáidem* fit better with both *TF* examples, even though these examples lack the long vowel (which is not always a sure guide in any case: see the examples cited above).

§5. Army of Fomorians reaches Dúnad Geirg

I. 128, *Cathach Catutchend*: *cathach* means ‘warlike’ (< *cath* ‘battle’). While I give the meaning of epithets within my translation, many of the characters’ personal names also have meanings which are indicative of their characters, particularly those such as the names of the Fomorians which seem to have been invented for this particular version of the tale.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁴ *Félire Húi Gormáin* (ed. Stokes, Sept. §25).

¹⁶⁵ *Advice to a Prince* (ed. O’Donoghue, §14).

¹⁶⁶ *Fled Bricrend* (ed. Windisch, §64).

¹⁶⁷ *Cath Maige Rath* (ed. O’Donovan, p. 258).

¹⁶⁸ *TF*, I. 567: ‘he sent out his shout of victory’.

¹⁶⁹ eDIL, s.v. *commaidm*.

¹⁷⁰ *Sruthar Matha* (ed. Stokes, p. 54).

¹⁷¹ See ‘Textual Tradition’, pp. 9–10.

Catutchend is also used as a nickname in *Duanaire Finn: tar cenn Fhailbhe chodat-chinn*,¹⁷² and as the name of Cú Chulainn's sword in *CRR*, §51: in *Cruadín Cotut-chend*.

l. 128, *bangaiscedach*: the same term is also found in *Cath Maighe Léna: beiris Símhá ingen Chorrлуirgnig air .i. badhb 7 banghaisgedach do muinntir Ghuill í*.¹⁷³ Similar terms include *banfénnid* 'female warrior';¹⁷⁴ *bengalgat* 'female champion': *Airne Fíngéin: for slicht na bangalgaite* (Boand);¹⁷⁵ *bengal* 'woman's feat of arms': *TBC-LL*, l. 3676: *bangala banúallach and so ale* (Medb).

ll. 131–2, *Stabarchend mac Súlremair, & Berngal Brec, 7 Būri Borbbriáthrach ... Fácen mac Dubloñsig: síabair* 'spectre, phantom' + *cenn* 'head'; *súil* 'eye' + *remor* 'stout, thick, fat'; *bern* 'breach' + *gal* 'fury, valour'; *búire* 'fury'; *dub* 'black' + *loingsech* 'exile'. Note that Síabarchend is given a different patronymic later in the text (l. 264), *mac Slisremuir: slis* 'side, wall' = 'the fat-sided' (?).

l. 132, *do sentūathaib Ulad*: Charles-Edwards states that in c. 700 the province of Ulster had three main political groupings: 'the Dál Fíatach of east Co. Down were generally recognised as the Ulaid (Ulstermen) proper'; their major rivals were the Cruithni who 'even went on to trumpet claims to be "the true Ulaid", the heirs of Conchobor mac Nessa and Cú Chulainn'; the weakest power was Dál Ríata in the far north-east.¹⁷⁶ It may be that the term *sentūatha Ulaid* once had political significance in relation to these various claims; however, in *TF* it seems to be being used simply as another place-name or tribe-name like 'Asia Minor' etc. A similar concept to *sentūath* seems to exist in the term *senchenél* 'old, original people'; cf. 'Glossed Extracts from the Tripartite Life': *Batar maic Amalgaid oc imchosnam imon rige, cethir chenel* (.i. *sencinela*) *fichet batar isin tir*.¹⁷⁷

l. 132, *Asia Móir*: eDIL states that *Asia Mór* refers to Asia Minor (i.e. the Anatolian peninsula), as distinct from the Roman province of Proconsular Asia (located in Asia Minor), which was called *Asia Bec*.¹⁷⁸

l. 134, *ara*: this is normally translated as 'charioteer', but it can also have the more general sense of 'messenger, attendant', which seems more likely here as there is no mention of Brod acting as Conchobar's charioteer (also *ara* is equated with *gilla Conchobair* in the following sentence).

l. 135, *llāigne lethanglassa*: eDIL defines *láigen* as specifically a broad-headed spear, observing that as such it is 'freq. found with adj. *lethanglas*' (*lethan* 'broad' + *glas* 'grey'), as here.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷² *Duanaire Finn I* (ed. MacNeill, p. 84).

¹⁷³ *Cath Maighe Léna* (ed. Jackson, ll. 412–13).

¹⁷⁴ See 'Role of Women', pp. 175–6.

¹⁷⁵ *Airne Fíngéin* (ed. Vendryes, l. 29).

¹⁷⁶ Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, p. 54.

¹⁷⁷ *Glossed Extracts from the Tripartite Life* (ed. Stokes, §57).

¹⁷⁸ eDIL, s.v. *mór*.

¹⁷⁹ eDIL, s.v. *láigen*.

l. 138, *círdub*: eDIL gives this as a separate entry *círdub*, defined as ‘compound of *dub*, but first element uncertain’.¹⁸⁰ A number of examples are given (e.g. *Fled Bricrend: ech círdub crúaidchend*;¹⁸¹ *Fís Adamnáin: slóig móra ina sesam do gréss i llathachaib círdubaib connice a cressa*;¹⁸² *Fochonn Loingse Fergusa meic Roich: máel demis chir-dub for cehtar de*.¹⁸³ eDIL suggests that the first element might be *cíar* ‘dark, murky, black’ or *cir* ‘jet’,¹⁸⁴ and there seems no reason why these examples cannot simply be explained as compounds with one of these words.

l. 138, *glass*: this can mean green, blue or grey; as eDIL says, ‘descriptive of various shades of light green and blue, passing from grass-green to grey’.¹⁸⁵ The precise meaning here depends on what the author wanted to convey. Green might appear more uncanny or supernatural; however, since in the following prophecy *glass* is identified as signifying *erch[ó]d imfæbor*, ‘blue-grey’ is perhaps the more likely translation here.¹⁸⁶

l. 140, *cid co tirc[h]an*: the MS reading is *tircran*, but it seems likely that this was meant to be *tirchan*, pres 3sg form of the verb *do-airchain* (or its MidIr simplex *tirchanaid*). Note that the simplex is attested in the following sentence, and although in MidIr compound verbs could be found alongside their simplex equivalents, the dependent form *-tirchan* of the simplex is closer to the MS reading (as opposed to the dependent form *-tirchain* of the compound verb, although note that Windisch emends to *tirchain*).¹⁸⁷

The presence of *co* is problematic here. There are no attestations of *cía* (interrog.) + *co*, although there are examples of *cía* (conj.) + *co* so perhaps there has been confusion with the conjunction, even though it is clearly a question here. Alternatively, this might be the interrogative *co* ‘how?’, in which case this might be the result of the combination of two different versions, *cid tirchan* and *co tirchan* (note that there has been a copying error with *tircran* as well).

For notes to Poem III, see ‘Textual Notes to the Verse’, p. 154.

l. 155, *dabach*: eDIL defines *dabach* as ‘a large tub or vat with two handles (for ale, wine, mead, curds, oil, water, or washing)’.¹⁸⁸

l. 156, *diarba chomainm Ōl Gūalai iar sin*: this could read either *diarba* (Windisch) or *diarb a* (Diplom.),¹⁸⁹ since both *-rba* and *-rb* are copula perf 3sg conjunct forms. In the latter case, *a* would be

¹⁸⁰ eDIL, s.v. *círdub*.

¹⁸¹ *Fled Bricrend* (ed. Windisch, §50).

¹⁸² *Fís Adamnáin* (ed. Windisch, §26).

¹⁸³ *Fochonn Loingse Fergusa meic Roich* (ed. Hull, p. 295).

¹⁸⁴ The latter explanation was proposed by Stokes, ‘Hibernica’, p. 255.

¹⁸⁵ eDIL, s.v. 2 *glas*. For a discussion of the range of meanings conveyed by the Middle Welsh cognate *glas*, see Hemming, ‘Pale Horses’, pp. 198–202.

¹⁸⁶ *TF*, l. 144: ‘destruction of a double-edged blade’; see discussion of this prophecy in ‘Textual Notes to the Verse’, pp. 154–5.

¹⁸⁷ Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, ll. 177–8.

¹⁸⁸ eDIL, s.v. *dabach*.

¹⁸⁹ Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, l. 196; Diplom., l. 33619.

poss pron 3sg masc (leniting), but this is problematic as it should be 3sg fem, referring to *dabach*. Meanwhile, if this is *diarba* the lenition is not a problem since this form causes lenition, so I have chosen this option.

See ‘*Ól nGála*’, pp. 159–62, for discussion of this name.

l. 156, *escra*: eDIL defines *escra* as a ‘vessel for dispensing liquid, apparently intermediate in size between a large jar and a drinking cup, but small enough to serve as the latter occasionally’.¹⁹⁰

l. 157, *féig*: for the adjective *féig*, eDIL lists the meaning (b) ‘of objects of sight, clear, luminous’.¹⁹¹ There are only two citations given, this example from *TF* and one from the Metrical *Dindshenchas*, *Brug na Bóinde I: a thir férach fénach féig*.¹⁹² However, for the latter example, eDIL suggests that this may in fact be a verb anyway. The only other examples of *féig* used with an object are with weapons, where it means ‘keen, sharp’, which does not work with *escra*. Possibly ‘glowing’ would work in this context.

For notes to Poem IV, see ‘Textual Notes to the Verse’, p. 156.

§6. Death of Gerg

l. 172, *gárit na hallmaraig gáir airgni*: according to eDIL, *gairid* ‘calls’ can be transitive or intransitive, while *gáirid* ‘shouts, calls’ is only intransitive – yet here there is a length mark but the verb is transitive.¹⁹³ It is possible that later forms of *gáirid* were transitive; in any case, here it seems likely that *gárit gáir* was a stylistic choice, using a *figura etymologica* for emphasis.

ll. 175–6, *bidbaid duit-siu sind uile; is fó duit ar comthuttim ar óen*: here Gerg seems to be saying that, as Ulstermen, both he and Conchobar are Maine’s enemies and so it should not matter to him if they destroy one another. Although this makes sense in the abstract, since Ulster and Connacht are depicted as fundamentally opposed to one another in this text (and elsewhere in the Ulster Cycle), it seems a slightly strange statement in the context of the marriage alliance that Gerg and Maine are seeking to form.

l. 176, *geib-siu it chind*: this phrase also occurs later in *TF*, l. 310: *ro gab ina chind*. The use of *gaibid* seems to refer to ‘holding’ i.e. keeping control of / defending a place (trans.), or perhaps ‘holding out’, i.e. against attack (intrans.). Windisch seems to take it as the former meaning, since he suggests that ‘den Platz’ or ‘das Haus’ is implied.¹⁹⁴ Meanwhile, eDIL takes it as intransitive,¹⁹⁵ which is perhaps preferable as no object is given in either case – although there is a similar example in *TF* where an

¹⁹⁰ eDIL, s.v. *escra*.

¹⁹¹ eDIL, s.v. *féig*.

¹⁹² *Brug na Bóinde I* (ed. Gwynn, l. 7).

¹⁹³ eDIL, s.v. 3 *gairid*; 1 *gáirid*.

¹⁹⁴ Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, pp. 479, 493 and 535, n. to l. 220.

¹⁹⁵ eDIL, s.v. *gaibid*, II (c).

object is given: *ro gabsat co sētrech 7 co ferda in tech co mmatain*, so perhaps an object is implied in these other examples.¹⁹⁶

Neither eDIL nor Windisch offer a suggestion as to how *i cind* fits into the phrase. As a prepositional phrase, it can mean ‘against, towards; in addition to; at the end of’, but none of these seem to work in this context. This might be an example of *i* used appositionally (as with l. 175 *innar n-Ultaib*), i.e. ‘hold out as a leader’.¹⁹⁷

l. 179, *fri cnes*: as a prepositional phrase, this means ‘next to’ but that does not seem to work in this context. Since *cnes* means ‘skin, surface’, perhaps here it means ‘front edge, front line’: *fri cnes urgaile* ‘to meet the front-edge of the battle-line’. This phrase also occurs later in *TF* with apparently the same meaning: l. 186, *fri cnes int sonnaig*; l. 254, *fri cnes na debtha*.

l. 182, *do-dechaid Cathach Catutchend eturru 7 in dorus*: although one might expect the 3sg masc form of the conjugated preposition here, eDIL states that ‘the pl. pron. is often used idiomatically, including by anticipation the second obj. with the first’.¹⁹⁸

l. 186, *tócfait: tócb-* is the usual stem for *do-fócaib*, but is simplified to *tóc-*, so that *tócf-* might be a transitional spelling.

ll. 192–3, *co torchair trīcha láech leis do muntir Geirg do gním a lámi féin a ōenur*: the use of *leis* and *do gním a lámi féin a ōenur* is tautological, so it may be that two versions have been combined or a gloss incorporated; on the other hand, it might be simply emphatic.

§7. Nuagel’s lament for Gerg

l. 196, *dar brēthir*: Windisch suggests emending this to *darm* or *dar mo*.¹⁹⁹ Examples from eDIL have the possessive,²⁰⁰ which might support the emendation: cf. e.g. *Tochmarc Étaíne: dar mo brēthir*.²⁰¹ On the other hand, the same phrase without the possessive occurs elsewhere in *TF* (ll. 337, 483), making it seem less likely that this was an error – rather it seems to have been a variant form of the expression.

l. 196, *is mór in gním gillai*: the sense of this seems to be to highlight the fact that a servant has been able to kill a king in his own house. A very similar sentiment is conveyed by Rónán at the end of *Fingal Ronáin*: *Is mór brig / do mac aithig guin maic ríg*.²⁰² Nuagel’s statement could be taken

¹⁹⁶ *TF*, l. 265: ‘they held the house vigorously and manfully until morning’.

¹⁹⁷ eDIL, s.v. *i*, 4.

¹⁹⁸ eDIL, s.v. *eter*.

¹⁹⁹ Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, p. 480, n. 4.

²⁰⁰ eDIL, s.v. *1 tar*, B V; *bríathar*.

²⁰¹ *Tochmarc Étaíne* (ed. Windisch, p. 121).

²⁰² *Fingal Ronáin* (ed. Greene, ll. 259–60; my transl.): ‘it is a great matter / for the son of a churl to slay the son of a king’. In a more comic setting, see Fer Loga’s humiliating defeat of Conchobar at the end of *SMMD* (ed. Thurneysen, §20); discussion by McCone (*Pagan Past*, p. 78).

straightforwardly, simply observing that this is a major deed for a lowly servant, or it could include some condemnation or irony. The fact that the article precedes both nouns suggests that this was a set phrase signifying a particular deed, a *gním gillai* as opposed to a *gním rí*g.

l. 197, *mór n-ingen i rraba féin chardes*: this is an example of the relative acting as a genitive. Here the noun to which the genitive refers is subject to a preposition, in which case the preposition acts with the relative particle as a genitive but is separated from the noun: ‘in whose friendship you were’.²⁰³

l. 198, *do-ringni rand tosaig laide*: Windisch notes that this is more usually the formula for introducing a dialogue poem, where the second person then speaks the second stanza; cf. ll. 105, 272.²⁰⁴ In cases where there is a single speaker, the sense must be that the speaker began to utter the poem, the performance of the first stanza then leading to further stanzas.

For notes to Poem V, see ‘Textual Notes to the Verse’, p. 133.

§8. Maine’s defence of Dúnad Geirg

ll. 241–2, *a sciath mór míleta fair 7 a dā sleig slemungéra uillendcha móra ina láim, & a chlaideb trom tortbuillech crúadgér comramach*: this is an example of MidIr prose style, with multiple alliterating adjectives (see n. to ll. 43–57, p. 106).

l. 244, *in tinsaitin*: the word *tinnsaitin* means ‘act of dripping, spilling, shedding’. There is also a word *imthinnsaitin* with a similar meaning ‘act of pouring, streaming forth’, formed from the intensifying prefix *imm-* + *tinnsaitin*, which is attested in *TBC-LL*, ll. 4196–7: *is é glascheó mór atchondaic-sium ... imthinnsaitin anála na n-ech 7 na curad*. However, in the *TF* MS the stroke over the *i* looks like an *n*-stroke (which is flat), as opposed to an *m*-stroke (which curls) – compare:

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l. 248, *logthanach*: eDIL cites *TF* as the only example of this word, and suggests that this is an adjective derived from *logad* ‘concession; handing over’ (verbal noun of *logaid*).²⁰⁵

l. 248, *ā[nrad]a*: the MS reading is *aradna*. As it stands, this is acc pl of *aradu* ‘preparation, arrangement, disposal, treatment; reins’; however, this does not make sense in this context and so seems likely to be an error. Note that Windisch does take this as a form of *aradu*, and his translation ‘bei einer

²⁰³ *SnG*, pp. 288–9.

²⁰⁴ Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, p. 536, n. to l. 255.

²⁰⁵ eDIL, s.v. *logthanach*.

Beleidigung’ is based on O’Clery’s glossary: *aradhain uilc* ‘insult, hard usage’ and O’Reilly’s dictionary: *aradhain* ‘abuse’.²⁰⁶ However, the meaning ‘insult, bad treatment’ only seems to be applied to *aradu* when found alongside the adjective *olc* or similar; cf. O’Clery’s entry; *Liamuin*: *fúair in gein aradain olc*;²⁰⁷ *TF*, l. 316: *ba liach drocharadu furri* – while elsewhere it is found alongside *maith*, suggesting that *aradu* itself is not inherently positive or negative; cf. *O’Davoren’s Glossary*: *sobartan .i. soaraide .i. araide maith*.²⁰⁸

My proposed emendation is *ánrada*, from which *aradna* could be an error of metathesis of non-contiguous sounds. *Ánrada* is gen sg of *ánrad* ‘hero, warrior, champion’: the gen sg form is attested in *O’Davoren’s Glossary*: *archú ánrada*,²⁰⁹ while the acc sg form is attested in *TTr*, ll. 214–15: *Ba trom trá la Iasón 7 la Hercoil 7 la ánrathu archena din sceolsain*. There is also an adjective *ánrata* ‘warlike, valiant’, which might be another option, although the pattern in this passage is nom sg + gen rather than noun + adjective.

It should be noted that both *ánrada* and *ánrata* are frequently attested in classical adaptations (as well as *AnS*), with which *TF* has been shown to have an affinity, which supports this emendation;²¹⁰ cf. *TTr* cited above; *TTr*, ll. 190–1: *racóraigit ócbad ard urlam ánrata ri imram*; *IÆ*, l. 2357: *na fir airdmenmnacha anrata*; *Togail na Tebe*: *ua hanrata aicned ind fhir sin*;²¹¹ *AnS*: *is é is ánrata 7 is urrundta ro bai d’fiannaib Érenn*.²¹²

l. 248, *nertlīa*: eDIL states that this refers to ‘a large stone used as a missile by warriors’.²¹³

l. 249, *rind ága*: *rind* can mean ‘spear’ or ‘star’, either of which would work in this context. However, there are several examples where *rind* ‘spear’ is found alongside *ág* (and *imguin* in some instances), suggesting that this is the preferable translation; cf. *TBC-LL*, l. 4445: *rind áig 7 imgona*; *TTr*², l. 828: *rind n-imgona fher mbetha*; *TBC-YBL*, l. 3269: *Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallaibh: rind n-āga; da rind aga 7 urlaimi*.²¹⁴

The repetition of *ága* here, following *oíbel ága* earlier, suggests that this list of epithets might have been added to over time.

ll. 249–50, *na Teora Connacht*: Charles-Edwards states that the Three Connachta were ‘the traditional ruling kindreds of the province, Uí Ailella, Uí Fiachrach and Uí Briúin’.²¹⁵

²⁰⁶ Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, p. 487; *O’Clery’s Irish Glossary*, A–G (ed. Miller, p. 367); O’Reilly, *Irish-English Dictionary*, p. 36.

²⁰⁷ *Liamuin* (ed. Gwynn, l. 111).

²⁰⁸ *O’Davoren’s Glossary* (ed. Stokes, §1454).

²⁰⁹ *O’Davoren’s Glossary* (ed. Stokes, §1397).

²¹⁰ See ‘Textual Correspondences’, p. 86.

²¹¹ *Togail na Tebe* (ed. Calder, l. 1544).

²¹² *AnS* (ed. Stokes, p. 318, n. to l. 5272).

²¹³ eDIL, s.v. *nert*.

²¹⁴ *Cogadh* (ed. Todd, p. 56).

²¹⁵ Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, p. 40.

l. 250, *cendmíl*: see discussion in n. to l. 12.

l. 250, *sodomna rí*g: this literally means ‘of good material of a king’; cf. the equivalent term *rí*gdomna, defined by eDIL as ‘lit. “material of a king”, hence the heir-apparent of a king or chief; sometimes merely son of a king (chief), prince’.²¹⁶

l. 253, *ché*t(s)cundscli: this must be *cét*- ‘first’ + *cuinndscle* ‘onset, attack, fight, battle’, so I propose omitting the first *s* as an error; cf. *TTr*, l. 1712: *comtar croderga curaid da cé*thundscli. Windisch suggests that the *sc* in *scund*- is an assimilation from *-scli* later in the word.²¹⁷

l. 257, *ro dī*chend Mani ē-sium īar scís chomluind: *scís* means ‘fatigue, tiredness’, and in transferred meaning ‘rest, repose, cessation’. Taken with the latter meaning, this might be translated as ‘after (i.e. at) the end of the fight’. However, there are several examples of *scís* + qualifying genitive meaning ‘wearied by’, including in a similar context in *Táin Bó Flidais*: *īar scis imgonā 7 imforráin iarom srainter for lucht in dú*naid.²¹⁸ Therefore, I follow this meaning here, the sense being that Fabric became wearied by the fight, which enabled Maine to behead him.

l. 260, *trī*chu chét: this literally means ‘thirty hundreds’, and is used of a military force and of a political or territorial unit, a system probably established during the eleventh century;²¹⁹ cf. e.g. *TBC-LU*, l. 148: *in trī*cha cét Galión. In *TF*, it seems to refer to a territorial unit, so I have used the translation ‘district’.

l. 260, *blo*[g]bēmnech: the MS reading is *blobemnech*. Windisch suggests *leg. blogbemnech*, lit. ‘fragment-smiting’ (*blog* + *béimnech*), which might be translated as ‘splintering’.²²⁰

l. 261, *scemgal*: in the MS, this is given as *scēm*gal, which *Diplom.* interprets as a *punctum delens* indicating that the *r* should be expunged.²²¹ The form *scemgal* is also attested in *TTr*, ll. 1414 and 1511: *scemgal na sculmairi*; *scemgal na scí*ath. It might be noted that the word *scemgal* is actually attested in *Comhrag Fir Diadh & Chon Cculainn*: *dus da ttáir sinde screamhghal teaglaig na cuidiochda*. This attestation might arguably provide a further supporting example; however, Best comments that this MS is very late and contains many difficulties.²²² Therefore, I follow *Diplom.*’s interpretation here (moreover, it is unclear what *screm* + *gal* ‘surface-fury’ would mean).

l. 262, *ro socht*: this form is only attested as perf 3sg of *sochtaid* ‘falls silent; stops’, but that does not make sense here. Instead, I suggest that this is a late pret form of *saigid*, treated as a weak verb

²¹⁶ eDIL, s.v. *rí*gdomna; see Charles-Edwards, *Early Irish and Welsh Kinship*, pp. 101–10; Jaski, *Early Irish Kingship*, pp. 236–40.

²¹⁷ Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, p. 537, n. to l. 319.

²¹⁸ *Táin Bó Flidais* (ed. Windisch, ll. 63–4).

²¹⁹ MacCotter, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 22; Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden- und Königsage*, pp. 76–7.

²²⁰ Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, p. 486, n. 1.

²²¹ *Diplom.*, p. 1145, n. 2.

²²² *Comhrag Fir Diadh* (ed. Best, p. 285); see p. 275.

in MidIr; cf. the analogy with *ro-saig* which in late MidIr was treated as a simple verb *roichid* with the pret stem *rocht-* (see also l. 608, *ra-sochtatar*).

l. 263, *i[c] cathugud*: several times throughout the text, the phrases *i cathugud* and *i cosnam* occur (cf. ll. 325–6, 398). Windisch suggests that these should be *leg. ic*, and although the preposition *i* does make sense in these contexts, it would be easy for the *c* to be assimilated.²²³ *Oc* (or *do*) is the usual preposition found with the verbal noun, and this emendation is supported by other examples where *ic/oc* is clearly the preposition used (e.g. ll. 402, 406, 620).

l. 264, *mac Slisremuir*: see n. to l. 131 where Síabarchend's father is called Súlreamar.

§9. Otherworldly woman visits Medb

l. 272, *do-ringni*: here and elsewhere (ll. 338, 571) in the MS this is given as *dor* with a suspension stroke. Windisch and Diplom. expand this to *do-rat*, since one might expect the suspension stroke only to represent one syllable.²²⁴ On the other hand, where the word is written in full at the start of a poem in *TF*, *do-ringni* is given (ll. 198, 417 (*do-ringset*), 525), so I have selected this expansion.

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For notes to Poem VI, see 'Textual Notes to the Verse', p. 138.

ll. 304–5, *int ochtmad maccóem na Crúachna*: *ochtmad* means 'eighth; one of eight'. Here it seems to hold some significance, possibly referring to a prestigious group in Connacht. However, I have found no reference to such a group elsewhere.

l. 309, *Aslingi Medba*: this designation suggests that this author viewed the episode concerning Medb as a distinct sub-section of the narrative, worthy of separate identification, possibly drawing a deliberate parallel with the *Aislinge Chonchobair* that occurred earlier on in the narrative (note that the tale-list evidence suggests that *Aislinge* (or *Fís*) *Chonchobair* may have been one title by which this tale was known).²²⁵ This singling-out of Medb's storyline indicates her centrality to this author's view of the plot.²²⁶

²²³ Windisch, 'Tochmarc Ferbe', p. 494, n. 1; p. 498, n. 4.

²²⁴ Windisch, 'Tochmarc Ferbe', l. 348; Diplom., l. 33749.

²²⁵ See 'Textual Tradition', p. 4.

²²⁶ See 'Role of Women', p. 180.

§10. Death of Maine

l. 310, *thair*: this is a later form of the adverb *tair*, ‘before, in front, yonder; in the east’. Since this section returns to Maine in Ulster territory, following the scene with Medb in Crúachain, ‘Maine in the east’ seems a plausible translation for the context.

l. 310, *ro gab ina chind*: see discussion for l. 176, *geib-siu it chind*.

l. 314, *ro dreb[r]aing*: the MS reading is *ro drebaing*, but, as Windisch suggests, this should probably be emended to *ro drebraing*, perf 3sg of *dringid*.²²⁷

l. 319, *gagar*: eDIL suggests that *gagar* means ‘some kind of vessel or cup (?)’, based on this context, since this is the only citation given.²²⁸ There is also a word *gadar*, *gagar* ‘hunting-dog’ which is well-attested; however, this seems incongruous in this context.

l. 319, *imscing*: this can mean ‘bed, couch’ or ‘covering’. Windisch takes it as the former meaning, although it seems strange for a bed to be actually made *línanairt* ‘of linen cloth’.²²⁹ I would suggest that in this case ‘covering’ could perhaps be extended to ‘wall-hanging’ or ‘tapestry’, since it is said to be *fri fraigid* ‘against/on the wall’. Note that eDIL places this *TF* citation under ‘bed, couch’, but the only other citation found with *línanairt* is under ‘covering’ (*doratt araile maigdin imscing do línanairt[t] laingil cuigi*), and moreover, eDIL actually suggests the meaning ‘tapestry’ for this citation elsewhere.²³⁰

l. 322, *do-fuit Berngal trā la Cobthach iar scís chomlaind*: see n. to l. 257.

l. 323, *ro dāsed immi iar sin 7 ro n-immir for slúag na Fomōrach*: this sentence is paralleled in *TTr*², ll. 1609–10: *rodāsed iar sin im Achíl, 7 roimbir forsna slúagu*.

l. 324, *lain[n]i*: this is likely to be the word *lainne*, intended for *luinne* ‘fierceness’, with which it was confused in the later period.²³¹ The MS reading is *laini* but Windisch claims that this should be *leg. lainni*,²³² since there are no attestations without the double consonant and the omission of an *n*-stroke would be an easy error, this emendation seems plausible.

ll. 325–6, *i[c] cathugud*: see n. to l. 263.

l. 326, *fo cossaib*: Windisch suggests emending this to *foa*.²³³ Although ‘their’ is certainly implied, this does not seem like a necessary emendation.

²²⁷ Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, p. 538, n. to l. 398.

²²⁸ eDIL, s.v. 2 *gagar*.

²²⁹ Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, p. 538, n. to l. 407.

²³⁰ eDIL, s.v. *imscing*; 1 *fraig*.

²³¹ eDIL, s.v. 1 *lainne*.

²³² Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, p. 492, n. 2.

²³³ *Ibid.*, p. 494, n. 2.

l. 326, *rout n-úrchair*: literally this means ‘the length of a cast’, but *rout* also came to mean ‘cast’ so here this seems to mean tautologically ‘cast of a cast’, i.e. a cast.

l. 327, *mánaís*: eDIL states that this was ‘a large spear with broad head and sharp point’.²³⁴

l. 329, *ro n-ecrand*: for discussion of this unusual use of a late MidIr verbal ending alongside a seemingly correctly-used masc infixed pronoun, see ‘Linguistic Analysis’, p. 17.

l. 331, *co torchratar bond fri bond 7 médi fri mēdi*: this phrase is also found verbatim in *TBC-LU*, ll. 2309–10; *TBC-LL*, l. 2316. Indeed, the expression *bond fri bond 7 médi fri médi* (or *bond fri mēdi*) recurs frequently as a formulaic description of battle carnage in many other texts, including *IÆ*, ll. 2229–30 (repeated ll. 2315–16): *co mbenadh bond fri medi 7 medi fri aroile acu*.²³⁵ Miles has suggested that the phrase may have originated in imitation of the Virgilian phrase *haeret pede pes* ‘foot cleaves to foot’.²³⁶

§11. Ferb’s first lament for Maine

l. 335, *chrōpartai[b]*: the MS reading is *chropartaig*. eDIL suggests *leg. chropartaib* for this citation, *cró* ‘blood’ + *pairt* ‘clot’.²³⁷ *Pairt chró* ‘clot of gore’ is a common phrase, and the compound *crópairt* is likely to be a variation of this. Although *partaig* might be a form of the adjective *pairtech* ‘sharing’, the dat pl of *pairt* (*partaib*) is more likely in the context, while *partaig* in the MS may have been due to eye-skip with *derfadaig*.

l. 337, *dar brēthir*: see n. to l. 196.

l. 338, *do-ringni*: Windisch and Diplom. expand this to *do-rat*,²³⁸ but see n. to l. 272.

For notes to Poem VII, see ‘Textual Notes to the Verse’, p. 139.

§12. Ferb’s dialogue with Fíannamail

l. 415, *ro tūarascaib*: this verb *do-fúarascaib* ‘discloses, reveals, makes known’ only seems to be transitive, so some kind of object must be implied, such as ‘his arrival’.

l. 416, *echlach*: although it is not indicated here whether the messenger is male or female, or whether they are attached to Ferb or Fíannamail, note that eDIL equates this *echlach* with the *bé thastil* who has appeared already attached to Dúnad Geirg.²³⁹ Since she features several times in the story,

²³⁴ eDIL, s.v. *manaís*.

²³⁵ See Poppe’s list of examples (*New Introduction*, p. 26).

²³⁶ *Aeneid* 10.360–1; Miles, *Heroic Saga*, p. 239.

²³⁷ eDIL, s.v. *l pairt*, (c).

²³⁸ Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, l. 435; Diplom., l. 33834.

²³⁹ eDIL, s.v. *taistel*.

including later in l. 523 when Domnall arrives in a parallel scene, it seems plausible that *echlach* also refers to her.

l. 416, *garba*: *garb* usually means ‘rough, rugged, coarse; rude, harsh’, but ‘bitter’ makes more sense here; cf. *Clanna Israél Uili: romarbadh leis, garb in scél*, which Scarre translates as ‘it is a bitter tale’.²⁴⁰

l. 416, *ro dassied*: the verb *dáistir* (only passive 3sg forms) is found in the phrase *dáistir imbi* ‘he becomes mad, furious’. *Ro dassied immi* seems to be perf passive sg with the conjugated preposition *im* + 3sg masc, thus: ‘it was enraged concerning him’, i.e. he was enraged. The more common form is *ro das(s)ed*, but eDIL accepts *ro dassied* (taken from *TF*) as a variant form. Note that both Windisch and Diplom. give this form as *ro dassed* without comment (suggesting an error on their part, since it is clearly *dassied* in the MS).²⁴¹

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It is worth noting that almost all citations for *dáistir* relating to persons come from *TF* or *TTr*, providing further evidence for the possible influence of the Irish classical adaptations on this version of *TF*.

For notes to Poem VIII, see ‘Textual Notes to the Verse’, p. 144.

l. 480, *forlond*: this means ‘superiority in strength or numbers’. Note that *Fíannamail* has 150 warriors while *Níall* has 100, so *Fíannamail* actually has the greater numbers. In conjunction with the following clause, it is clear, then, that *forlond* must refer to the number of men attacking *Fíannamail* personally. Thus *marōen* (in the adverbial sense ‘together, jointly’) here seems to mean ‘at the same time’.

ll. 480–1, *nīr damad cert comlaind dó*: a similar phrase is found in *TBC-LL*, l. 4025: *ní damar fīr fer dó ná chomlund óenfir* (i.e. *Cú Chulainn*). O’Leary has discussed the concept of the ‘fair fight’ (*fīr fer*) in medieval Irish literature, and comments that unequal fights are regularly condemned as unjust within the heroic code.²⁴²

§13. Ferb’s lament for the Connachta

l. 483, *heñgnama*: *engnam* means ‘skill at arms, valour’, and is found frequently in *TBC* and classical adaptations; cf. e.g. *TBC-LL*, l. 941: *búaid n-eñgnama*; l. 2369: *do chomartha a gascid 7 a eñgnama*; *TTr*², ll. 1097–9: *nī raibe do dóinib domain ceped febas a n-engnama ... lucht conístáis*

²⁴⁰ *Clanna Israél Uili* (ed. and transl. Scarre, §3).

²⁴¹ Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, l. 516; Diplom., l. 33913.

²⁴² O’Leary, ‘*Fír Fer*’, pp. 5–7.

ermaisi Hectoir; l. 1207: *degthóisech engnama* (i.e. Hector); *Togail na Tebe*: *nirba tualaing ursclaidi na hengnoma iad*; *ba hoc arai n-aisi, ger-ua athlom n-engnoma*;²⁴³ *CCath*, ll. 5078–9: *luct gaisccid nó engnama*; *lÆ*, ll. 2427–8: *med 7 danadus in engnuma doronsat friu*.

For notes to Poem IX, see ‘Textual Notes to the Verse’, p. 146.

§14. Ferb’s incitement of Domnall

ll. 523–4, *lond fri úair ñgascid cách tānic and*: this is an example of *cách* as a relative antecedent in the meaning ‘the one who’, thus: ‘bold in a time of feats of arms is the one who has come there’, referring to Domnall.²⁴⁴

For notes to Poem X, see ‘Textual Notes to the Verse’, p. 150.

l. 565, *ro dásed*: for this word, Diplom. comments: ‘*m*-stroke over *s* MS’.²⁴⁵ However, although the abbreviation looks like an *m*-stroke (cf. the next word ‘*im*’), I follow Diplom.’s conclusion that this should be read as *-ed* here.

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l. 565, *fer cech fîr*: this might be a fossilised independent dative, with MidIr unstressed vowels (OIr dat sg *-iur*), i.e. ‘a man fell for every man of his followers’. Alternatively, Windisch interprets this as an expression meaning ‘every man’ (presumably taking *fîr* as genitive, lit. ‘a man of each man’).²⁴⁶

l. 566, *guin galand*: *galann* means ‘valour, warlike deeds’, but appears most commonly in the phrase *guin galann*, applied to a mortal wound given in warfare.

l. 566, *de-sium*: this seems to be *dî* for *dó*, since it is Domnall who receives the mortal wound here.

§15. Ferb’s second lament for Maine

For notes to Poem XI, see ‘Textual Notes to the Verse’, p. 152.

§16. Battle between Conchobar and Medb, and Death of Ferb

l. 608, *ra-sochtatar*: on this form, see. n. to l. 262.

²⁴³ *Togail na Tebe* (ed. Calder, ll. 1968–9 and 2511–12).

²⁴⁴ *SnG*, p. 277.

²⁴⁵ Diplom., p. 1154, n. 2.

²⁴⁶ Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, p. 542, n. to l. 675.

l. 609, *ās cind: ós* (MidIr *ás*) can have the meaning ‘overlooking’, denoting proximity, a meaning which is preferable to the more usual ‘over, above’, which would not make sense in this context unless we are to understand that Medb is on a hill above the field, which is nowhere stated. eDIL states: ‘in late MidIr and ModIr the compd. prep. *ós cind* takes the place of the simple form [*ós*]’, which is how I interpret this use of the compound preposition here.²⁴⁷

l. 609, *do-ringni crúadchippi grinni bec dī*: it is not clear what the subject of the verb is, particularly due to MidIr falling-together of unstressed vowels. In usual word order, one would expect subject then object, thus: ‘the phalanx formed a troop’ (although ‘the troop formed a phalanx’ would make more sense), in which case *cippi* would be nom sg and *grinni* acc sg.

Alternatively, Medb might be the subject (note that she is the subject of the verbs in the surrounding sentences), thus: ‘she made a phalanx out of a troop’, in which case *cippi* would be acc sg and *grinni* gen sg. eDIL states that, following *do-gní*, ‘the name of the material, etc., of which something is made is introduced by *de*’, but there are a few examples using the genitive instead (as would be the case here);²⁴⁸ cf. *TBC-LU*, l. 1062: *dogní claidiub craind*; *An Old-Irish Metrical Rule*: *ní dene tenid ratha*.²⁴⁹

Note that eDIL suggests the translation ‘she became (as it were) a small hard phalanx (?)’.²⁵⁰ Presumably ‘she became’ is interpreting *do-ringni ... dī* as ‘she made of herself’, but it seems a strange translation since Medb could not become a battle-formation on her own (unless ‘she with her troops’ is implied). Moreover, this interpretation only translates one of the nouns, when this sentence has two (*cippi* and *grinni*). Therefore, I prefer the translation ‘she made a battle-formation out of a troop’, taking *dī* as the conjugated preposition *do* + 3sg fem, ‘for herself’.

In terms of the role of *bec* in the sentence, if *cippi* is nom sg and *grinni* acc sg, then *bec* could agree with either of them (preferably *grinni* as it is adjacent to it). However, in the preferred interpretation, where *cippi* is acc sg and *grinni* gen sg, then *bec* must agree with *cippi*.

The compound *crúadchippe* ‘hardened battle-formation’ is also found in *TTr*, ll. 1966–7: *tanic immach assin chathraig ina chrúad-chippi chatha*. Windisch comments on the recurrence of the term *cippe* in *TTr*, and also notes how in *TTr* the leader of the troop is part of the phalanx, but emerges from it to engage in single combat, giving Hector as an example (*TTr*, l. 1472 ff.).²⁵¹ This is also what Medb does, and one might suggest, given the textual correspondences between *TF* and *TTr*, that a deliberate comparison is being made between Medb and Hector, in order to emphasise Medb’s positive portrayal in *TF*.²⁵² Similarly, the textual borrowing from the description of Pallas in *IÆ* seems intended to create a deliberate sense of foreboding surrounding Maine’s departure, since an audience familiar with the

²⁴⁷ eDIL, s.v. 1 *ós*.

²⁴⁸ eDIL, s.v. *do-gní*, II (a).

²⁴⁹ *Old-Irish Metrical Rule* (ed. Strachan, p. 194).

²⁵⁰ eDIL, s.v. 2 *grinde*.

²⁵¹ Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, p. 543, n. to l. 724.

²⁵² See ‘Role of Women’, p. 180.

Aeneid would know that Pallas will soon meet a tragic death, and indeed Maine does turn out to be another young warrior cut down in his prime.²⁵³

l. 609, *idna*: this means ‘spear, weapon’, generally found in pl as ‘spears, weapons’. This is the better attested and more secure meaning, and so potentially the preferable translation. However, there is also a possible meaning ‘banner, standard’; cf. *TBC-LL*, ll. 4439–40: *co n-ócaib dubartacha dubsúlib co n-idna rúad lassamain*; *TTr*, l. 1446: *atchondarcsa and idnaid immaird* (note that the spears are described separately here); *TTr*, l. 592: *tuargabsat Troiannai idnaid catha forru*. This last example is particularly close to the *TF* phrase, and so given the textual correspondences between *TTr* and this section of *TF*, I would suggest that ‘banner, standard’ is also meant here.

ll. 610–11, *chnedach crēchtach*: here we see a stylistic feature of MidIr texts, in the use of several alliterating adjectives that mean the same thing. Together they seem to mean ‘severely wounded’.

l. 612, *Tolc Míled*: this seems to be the name of Medb’s weapon, literally ‘Soldiers’ Breach’, i.e. a weapon used to cause a breach in a rank of warriors. *Tolg* is a word also attested in *TBC* and classical adaptations; cf. *TBC-LL*, ll. 4623–4: *airm i tát na láith gaile anair isin cath bérait toilg trisin cath síar ... rapad mo thoilg-sea*; *IÆ*, l. 2620: *dobeir Mestensius tolg dermhair i cath na Troianach*; *TTr*, ll. 1724–5: *racrithnaigsetar na catha risna tolcaib tréna rathendsatar na trenfîr*.

ll. 611–12, *gebid cách díb sroigled 7 essorcoin, lēod 7 letrad, brúd 7 básugud a chēle*: there is a striking textual correspondence between this sentence and an almost identical one from *IÆ*, ll. 2314–16: *ros-geb for sraiglead 7 esorgain, leod 7 leadradh, brud 7 brisiudh 7 basagadh na Troianach gu mbenad bond fri medi aigi*.²⁵⁴ Note that the phrase *bond fri medi* does not occur in *TF* here, although the similar *bond fri bond 7 médi fri mēdi* does occur in l. 331.

ll. 614–15, *amal lēomain londchrēchtaig*: Windisch suggests that this simile has been derived from *TTr*, l. 1957: *dam ndían ndásachtach 7 leoman londchrechtach*.²⁵⁵

l. 615, *gaí chró*: eDIL states that this refers to ‘a tent or probe to keep a wound open; a pledget or roll (of lint etc.) applied to a wound; by extension, a wound unhealed, a wound still bleeding, a haemorrhage’.²⁵⁶ In *TF*, it seems to refer to a type of dressing for a wound rather than a wound itself: the image is one of Conchobar’s rage being so great as to cause his dressings to burst off him. Note that Windisch was not aware of this term and so suggests *leg. ágai* (a form of *ága* ‘joint’): ‘die Stücke (voll) Blut herabfielen’.²⁵⁷

²⁵³ See Shercliff, ‘Textual Correspondences’, pp. 197–8.

²⁵⁴ A similar sentence also occurs earlier in *IÆ*, ll. 2228–30: *nos-geb sroigleadh 7 esargain, leod 7 leadradh 7 dichendad co mbenadh bond fri medi 7 medi fri aroile acu*.

²⁵⁵ Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, p. 544, n. to l. 733.

²⁵⁶ eDIL, s.v. *gae*, (a); see O’Rahilly, ‘*Copgha*’, pp. 183–6.

²⁵⁷ Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, p. 516, n. 1; p. 517.

l. 618, *ferchutredaig*: *ferchuitredach* means ‘a member of a *ferchuitred*’, which eDIL defines as ‘proportion (?), complement (?) of men; explained as “a group of three men having some common bond or affinity”’.²⁵⁸ The main instance of this term (aside from *TF*) is in *TBC*, where *ferchutredaig fer nHérend* are ‘the triads of the men of Ireland’, groups of three men with the same name (the three Conaires etc.) who arrive at the muster of the men of Ireland for the final battle. In *TBC-LU*, their names are enumerated, followed by: *Ferc[h]uidred Fer nÉreand inso, cach triar cenmot[h]á an robí Cú Chulaind díib riam*. Shortly afterwards, they arrive for the battle: *Is and sin táncadar ina ferchuitreda ind athslógaid*.²⁵⁹ In the equivalent place in *TBC-LL*, the enumeration of their names in the muster is preceded by: *And sain daríachtatar chucu-som ’no ferchutredaig fer nHérend, & ba hed a ngním-sin uile ’sin chath ar bith gona Conchobuir diambad fair bad róen 7 ar bith anthe Ailella & Medba dámbad forro conmebsad. Acus ba sed and so anmand na ferchutredach*.²⁶⁰

It will be noted that in *TBC-LL*, the *ferchutredaig* have the same role as in *TF*, to carry Medb away from the battle if she is defeated. In *TBC-LU*, the *ferchutredaig* are not said to have this role; however, when they arrive for the battle, also arriving at the same time are *triar ... di thraig ... Nistailcc Medb isin chath [acht] ar srengail nAililla asin chath mád fair no maidset nó ar guin Conchobair mád fair bad lén*.²⁶¹ This suggests that in the earlier version of *TBC*, the *ferchutredaig* were only the ‘triads’ of men with the same name, while their role in carrying Ailill and Medb off from the battle was an innovation in *TBC-LL* based on their conflation with these other *triar ... di thraig*. Thus, although the use of *amal bá bés dóib* in *TF* implies that this was an established custom, this role of the *ferchutredaig* seems in fact to have been an invention of *TBC-LL*, while its recurrence in *TF* provides strong evidence that the LL-version of *TBC* in particular was a source for the *TF*-author. In *TF* it is the role in protecting Medb that has been retained, and not the association with groups of three, which is why I translate *ferchutredaig* as ‘bodyguards’ here rather than ‘triads’.

There is also a thirteenth-century text called *Ferchuitred Medba*, a tale in which Medb marries a number of successive candidates for the Connacht throne, attested in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawlinson B 512.²⁶² A different version, entitled *Cath Boinde*, is found in the Book of Lecan. O’Neill comments that the language of both versions is MidIr, although *Ferchuitred Medba* contains a greater

²⁵⁸ eDIL, s.v. *ferchuitred*.

²⁵⁹ *TBC-LU*, ll. 3982–3 and 3997: ‘These triads made up what was called the *Ferchuitred* of the men of Ireland, not counting those of them whom Cú Chulainn had previously killed’; ‘Then came the *ferchuitred*, the triads of that second mustering’.

²⁶⁰ *TBC-LL*, ll. 4688–91: ‘Then there came to them also the *ferchutredaig*, the triads of the men of Ireland, and their sole function in the battle was to slay Conchobor if he should be defeated and to rescue Ailill and Medb if it were they who were overcome. And these are the names of the triads ...’.

²⁶¹ *TBC-LU*, ll. 4000–2: ‘three men on foot ... Medb allowed them into battle only to drag Ailill out of the conflict if the enemy defeated him, or to kill Conchobar if it were he who was overcome’.

²⁶² *Ferchuitred Medba* (ed. Meyer). On *Ferchuitred Medba*, see Edel, ‘Caught between History and Myth?’, pp. 162–4.

number of later forms.²⁶³ The use of *ferchuitred* here seems to be a playful reinterpretation of the term as ‘Medb’s share of men’ or similar.

l. 621, *amal fáel fo chāirib*: Windisch notes that this simile is also found in *TTr*², l. 1433: *amal fóelaid etir chāircha*.²⁶⁴

l. 624, *forba*: this could be *orba* ‘territory’ with MidIr unhistorical *f*, or *forba* ‘the best; the greater part’. I would suggest that ‘the greater part’ does not make sense alongside *uile*, although ‘the best’ might make sense with the meaning ‘nobles’, thus: ‘all the nobles of Ulster’. However, ‘territory’ seems preferable here.

l. 630, *ainm*: Windisch suggests *leg. a ainm*, since the poss pron 3sg fem *a* could easily have been assimilated with *ainm*.²⁶⁵

l. 633, *glónāthe*: see discussion of the meaning of this word in n. to l. 65.

²⁶³ *Cath Boinde* (ed. O’Neill, p. 173).

²⁶⁴ Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, p. 544, n. to l. 743.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 516, n. 3.

Textual Notes to the Rhyming Syllabic Verse

Medieval Irish verse can be divided into two different kinds of metre, rhyming syllabic verse and *rosc*, both of which are found in *TF*. Poems I–II and V–XI are written in the former metre. Rhyming syllabic verse is the predominant type of verse (both secular and religious), in texts dating from the OIr period up until the seventeenth century. It is divided into stanzas, usually of four lines each, with a fixed number of syllables in each line and in the word at the end of each line. There is obligatory end-rhyme, and usually also internal rhyme and alliteration.²⁶⁶ There is a wide variety of rhyming syllabic metres, distinguished from one another by the number of syllables in a line and in the word at the end of the line, the number of lines in a stanza, and the position of the end-rhyme. This enabled the production of several medieval metrical tracts setting out the rules and distinguishing characteristics for the different types of metre. In terms of the analysis of the metres of the *TF* poems, it should be noted that, although in Early ModIr the rules for metrics were very strict, in the OIr period and especially in the MidIr period, these were not so rigid; therefore, the poems in *TF* do not always conform exactly to the expected patterns. Discussions of the rules governing OIr and MidIr rhyming syllabic verse, such as the functioning of rhyme, consonance, alliteration, elision and so on, are given by Murphy and Thurneysen.²⁶⁷

The predominant metre in *TF* is *deibide scaílte*, $7^x 7^{x+1}$ or 2^2 ; $7^x 7^{x+1}$ or 2^2 (Murphy's Metre 63), although this metre is not necessarily strictly applied throughout each poem. Poems I and IX are in different metres (discussed below). As the structure of *deibide scaílte* indicates, *deibide* metres can contain a type of rhyme which differs from the usual functioning of medieval Irish rhyme. Rhyme normally begins with the first stressed vowel of the rhyming word, then every vowel must be identical (including quantity) and every consonant must belong to the same phonetic class and have the same quality.²⁶⁸ However, in *deibide* metres, rhyme of a stressed syllable (*rinn*) with an unstressed syllable (*airdrinn*) is most commonly found. In this case, a final stressed long vowel may rhyme with its unstressed short form.²⁶⁹ *Deibide* metres have the rhyme scheme a b; c d, i.e. rhyming couplets.²⁷⁰

Given the MidIr date of *TF*, the rhyming of unstressed vowels should also be mentioned. As stated above, rhyming vowels should strictly be identical. However, with the falling-together of unstressed vowels that occurred in the MidIr period, unstressed vowels came to be pronounced the same and so could rhyme more freely with one another, as may be seen in the poems in *TF*.²⁷¹ In the MidIr

²⁶⁶ Breatnach, 'Zur Frage der *Roscada*', p. 197.

²⁶⁷ Murphy, *Early Irish Metrics*, pp. 28–45; Thurneysen, *Old Irish Reader*, p. 37. Rules for Early ModIr poetry may be found in Knott, *Introduction to Irish Syllabic Poetry*.

²⁶⁸ Ó Cuiv, 'Phonetic Basis', p. 96.

²⁶⁹ Murphy, *Early Irish Metrics*, pp. 28–31.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

period, elision was also variable. In the *TF* poems, unstressed vowels may elide with a preceding vowel, but in other cases they may not. In terms of syllable count, it will be seen that most of the poems tend to have seven syllables per line but always with some exceptions. I have emended in order to provide seven syllables where there is a very simple explanation for the irregular syllable count (for example, assimilation of vowels), but I have not emended where this would require more disruptive intervention. Finally, the last word or phrase of a poem is called the *dúnad* ('closing'), and corresponds in part or completely to the first word or phrase of the poem. In *TF*, almost every *dúnad* is of the *saigid* type where the whole opening word is repeated.²⁷² In the MS, the *dúnad* of each poem (or at least its first letter) is repeated after the final line, presumably to signal the end of the poem and to identify what the *dúnad* is. This is significant as it shows that the scribe considered each poem to constitute a unit and to have been recorded in its entirety.

Poem I. Ollgáeth's first prophecy

This poem consists of four-line stanzas, each couplet composed of a long line (seven (or six) syllables) and a short line (three syllables). Moreover, the short lines b and d end in one-syllable words which rhyme.²⁷³ This resembles a relatively rare metre, *cró cummaisc etir rannaigeacht móir ocus sruth di aill*, 7¹ 3¹ 7¹ 3¹ (Murphy's Metre 31); however, in *TF* the long lines seem to vary between seven and six syllables. As observed by Windisch, in an additional metrical ornament, the last word of the long line rhymes with the first stressed word of the short line: this is *aicill* rhyme.²⁷⁴ There is frequent use of alliteration, occurring in the majority of lines; e.g. 1a *in gēth*, *grānni in grith*; 3c *beti cuirp i cossair chairn*; etc.

l. 67, *ro bed[g]*: The MS reading is *ro bedb*. Meyer gives this citation under the entry '*bedbaim?* I tremble?' as: '*bith robedb* (leg. *ro bedc*)'.²⁷⁵ Meyer's verb *bedbaim* is not attested in eDIL; in any case, his emendation *bedc/bedg* seems to have been suggested for the purposes of rhyme as *Gerg* ends in a voiced stop *g*.

If we emend to *ro bedg*, this would be perf 3sg of *bidgaid/bedgaid* 'jumps; starts; is startled, affrighted'; thus 'the world was afraid' (with poetic syntax). This form is attested elsewhere; cf. *Saltair na Rann*: *tria chlár cruaid i toeb a chinn / ro bidgc in gái gluais gerthind*;²⁷⁶ *Lorgaireacht an tSoidigh Naomhtha*: *ro bidhg an ingen i nd-airdi*;²⁷⁷ *Passions and Homilies*: *amal ro-bidg 7 immeclaig neam hi cesad Crist*.²⁷⁸

²⁷² Murphy, *Early Irish Metrics*, p. 44.

²⁷³ See Windisch, '*Tochmarc Ferbe*', p. 446.

²⁷⁴ Murphy, *Early Irish Metrics*, p. 28.

²⁷⁵ Meyer, *Contributions to Irish Lexicography* I, 191.

²⁷⁶ *Saltair na Rann* (ed. Stokes, ll. 6075–6).

²⁷⁷ *Lorgaireacht an tSoidigh Naomhtha* (ed. Falconer, ll. 2369–70).

²⁷⁸ *Passions and Homilies* (ed. Atkinson, ll. 33–4).

l. 68, *raīnfid in fer*: Diplom. gives this as *raīnfid fer*, with a note that there is an erasure after *raīnfid*.²⁷⁹ In the MS, there seems to be an erased or faded ‘in’ between these words. I suggest that this should be included in the line (it occurs without comment in Facs. and Windisch’s edition), since seven syllables would be more regular (although not enforced elsewhere in the poem). The definite article would make sense in this context, since it refers to a particular man, i.e. Brod, who will put ‘a spear through Gerg’.

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l. 72, *snigfid fuil formna fer*: this line has six syllables. As it stands, it seems to read literally ‘the blood of the shoulders of men will flow’, with *formna* as gen pl. However, Windisch suggests that a preposition such as *a* has been omitted from before *formna*, in which case *formna* would be dat sg (OIr *-u*).²⁸⁰ A similar expression is found in Fedelm’s prophecy in *TBC-LU*, l. 107: *snigfid crú a cnesaib curad* – here the verb is followed by the preposition *a*, which may support the emendation. However, note that here the following noun is pl, which we might also expect ‘shoulders’ to be, perhaps making Windisch’s suggestion less likely. If a preposition were to be added, *co* is arguably a better candidate, on analogy with *MU*, ll. 306–7: *snigis tromshnechta ... co rránic co formnu fer* (*formnu* as acc pl). Other possible prepositions include *dar* and *for*.

Meanwhile, if no preposition is added, an alternative interpretation would be to take *formna* as the noun ‘best/choicest/greatest part’, thus: ‘blood will flow, the best of men [will be] / spear against spear’. There are examples of the phrase *formna fer* with both meanings: ‘shoulders of men’, cf. *MU* cited above; *TTr* (Book of Ballymote): *co roiched fuil formnada fer*,²⁸¹ or ‘best/greatest part of men’, cf. *Comthóth Lóegairi co Cretim 7 a Aided: slechtais Lóegaire co dutrachtach co formnu fer nÉrenn do Patraic*,²⁸² *TBDD*, ll. 469–70: *Conaire ... co formnaib fear nÉrenn imme*.

However, the long line is more likely to be self-contained and not carry over into the short line, so the former interpretation of *formna* as ‘shoulders’ seems more probable, and since it makes sense as it stands in the MS, I will not emend, especially as several of the long lines in this poem only have six syllables.

l. 74: this line has six syllables. Windisch claims that *ria m-* is a metrical error (‘der metrische Fehler wird in *ria m-* stecken’), although what he means by this is unclear.²⁸³

²⁷⁹ Diplom., l. 33540, n. 5.

²⁸⁰ Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, p. 470, n. 1.

²⁸¹ *TTr* (in the Book of Ballymote (Dublin, RIA 23.P.12), 230r–247r; at 234va49–50).

²⁸² *Comthóth Lóegairi co Cretim* (ed. Stokes, p. 564).

²⁸³ Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, p. 470, n. 2.

l. 80: this line has six syllables. The word *ma* could be a MidIr corruption of the preposition *im* (causing lenition), or possibly an abbreviated form of the preposition with the poss pron 3sg masc *'ma*. Windisch emends to the unabbreviated form *imma*, with poss pron 3sg masc, but this is arguably not necessary.²⁸⁴

ll. 82, 84: these lines have six syllables. This is acknowledged by Windisch,²⁸⁵ and I would argue that we must also recognise that the rest of the poem may also have been intended to contain a mixture of seven- and six-syllable lines. For this reason, I do not follow Windisch's emendations in this poem.

In terms of the meaning of this prophecy, it will be seen that certain references prefigure the events of the tale, especially with regard to the extent of the destruction. *Urchur arad tri reing rí* (l. 70) refers to Brod's killing of Gerg (in §6) by casting a spear through him (see n. to l. 134 for this translation of *ara* as 'servant'). *Bás meic rí do lágin rí* (l. 78) refers to the death of Maine, 'the son of a king', at the hand of Conchobar. There may also be some irony in the phrase *tolg for Meidb*, since *Tolg Miled* is said to be the name of Medb's own weapon at the end of the tale (l. 612). The final word, *deilm*, refers back to the opening phrase *deilm in gāth* (in its function as the *dúnad*), but may also be an allusion to the common phrase *deilm catha* (cf. e.g. *Félire Óengusso*).²⁸⁶

Poem II. Cathbad and Conchobar's dialogue

Almost all lines resemble *deibide scaílte*, although 2ab and 5ab differ in that the rhyme is between words with the same number of syllables. Except for 4a, there are consistently seven syllables per line. There is some use of alliteration but it does not occur regularly.

l. 107, *finna latt*: *la* seems to have an idiomatic use alongside *ro-finnadar*, since in other attestations it is not even translated by scholars; cf. *Bórama: finta latt in mór in marbad*,²⁸⁷ *Betha Beraigh: fionnta libh cia doroine na ferta sa 7 ma miorbuile*.²⁸⁸

l. 109, *ar-nom-thá*: *-nom-* is puzzling here. Windisch suggests a parallel with *arom-thá* in *Serglige Con Culainn: dornasc d'ór aromthá*,²⁸⁹ and notes moreover that MS H.4.22 has *arromtha*,²⁹⁰ so it is possible that in *TF* the *-n-* has arisen from a misreading of *-r-* at some point.

l. 119, *do-fáeth Mani cech ail*: this is the only line in this poem which is six syllables long. Windisch suggests adding *mó* to this line: *mó cech ail* 'greater than/above every reproach', referring to

²⁸⁴ Windisch, 'Tochmarc Ferbe', l. 107.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 533, n. to l. 100.

²⁸⁶ *Félire Óengusso* (ed. Stokes, Jun. 29).

²⁸⁷ *Bórama* (Diplom., l. 38650).

²⁸⁸ *Betha Beraigh* (ed. Plummer, §57).

²⁸⁹ *Serglige Con Culainn* (ed. Dillon, l. 785).

²⁹⁰ Windisch, 'Tochmarc Ferbe', p. 534, n. to l. 141.

Maine.²⁹¹ *Cech ail* works as a cheville without this, i.e. Maine's death will be a reproach. However, since this poem is otherwise consistent in its number of syllables per line, the emendation may be justified. *Mó* is a valid guess, which would alliterate with *Mani*; in this emendation Windisch follows *Saltair na Rann: oculus Moisi, mo cech n-ail*.²⁹²

l. 122, *chomaltaib*: eDIL translates *comalta* as 'foster-brother/-sister'.²⁹³ It does give a few examples 'with wider connotation', although even here it seems a figurative use; e.g. Christ and Conchobar in *Aided Chonchobuir: do comhalta-sa, in fer rogeánair a n-óenaidchi frit*.²⁹⁴ However, in *TF* a broader meaning than just 'foster-brother' is definitely intended – perhaps the meaning was stretched here in order to provide alliteration.

l. 123, *chaiss*: according to eDIL, *cas* includes the meaning 'of terrain, mountains etc. of dense vegetation (?)'; somet. translated 'steep';²⁹⁵ cf. *Loch n-Érne: hi Cruachain cais* (translated as 'thick-wooded' by Gwynn);²⁹⁶ *An Address to Aonghus of Islay: ní mór as léir as don fhairrgi / don thsléibh chas as aired ann*;²⁹⁷ *The Glenmasan Manuscript: re slis Locha Cuilidh cais*.²⁹⁸ It is unlikely to mean 'steep' in *TF* as *Crúachain* is a plain, and moreover, although the latter two examples give the translation 'steep', 'thick-wooded' would also work in both contexts; for these reasons, I follow Gwynn's translation.

l. 124, *nī thecat ūait dara n-ais*: literally this means 'they do not come from you across their back'. This is a combination of two phrases, 'they will not get away from you' and 'they will not come back'; however, both concepts cannot be conveyed in a single phrase in English: 'they will not escape from you' contains the implication that they will not come back.

l. 126, *fethim*: this may be the verbal noun *fethem* of *fethid*, so *foichle fethim* would mean 'prepare to keep watch'. Alternatively, eDIL suggests that it might be imperative 2sg of *fethid*, influenced by the verbal noun *fethem*,²⁹⁹ so *foichle fethim* might mean 'take heed, keep watch', which is perhaps more in keeping with the dialogue nature of the poem.

Poem V. Nuagel's lament for Gerg

Almost all lines resemble *deibide scaílte*, although 3ab, 3cd and 10cd differ in that the rhyme is between words with the same number of syllables. With a few exceptions (e.g. 4c, 5a, 10a), there are

²⁹¹ Windisch, 'Tochmarc Ferbe', p. 534, n. to l. 151.

²⁹² *Saltair na Rann* (ed. Stokes, l. 4451).

²⁹³ eDIL, s.v. *comalta*.

²⁹⁴ *Aided Chonchobuir* (ed. Meyer, §4).

²⁹⁵ eDIL, s.v. *cas*.

²⁹⁶ *Loch n-Érne* (ed. and transl. Gwynn, l. 61).

²⁹⁷ *Address to Aonghus of Islay* (ed. Bergin, §15).

²⁹⁸ *Glenmasan Manuscript* (ed. Mackinnon, l. 16).

²⁹⁹ eDIL, s.v. *fethid*.

mostly seven syllables per line. There is some use of alliteration, particularly in alliterative descriptions of Gerg (e.g. 2bcd *ócléach find fēbderg, / fer fíal fomórda ferda, / aircech álaind ardergna*).

l. 199, *iss é*: Murphy notes that, in MidIr, the initial *i* of the copula may be dropped, which seems to be the case here if this line is to have seven syllables.³⁰⁰

l. 202, *comlund*: it is likely that the preposition *i* should be restored before *comlund*: this could easily have been assimilated with *sínte* and does not affect the syllable count due to elision.

l. 204, *ócléach*: this line has six syllables. Windisch argues that this is to be read as a trisyllabic word, *óacléach*, if this line is to have seven syllables.³⁰¹

l. 205, *fomórda*: this means ‘resembling or pertaining to a *fomóir*’, but is seemingly not widely attested. It seems to have this meaning of ‘*fomóir*-like’ in *Cath Maige Rath*, but apparently not in a negative way, as it describes the hero Congal: *fiad-mil fuath-réadgach fomórda fairgi*.³⁰² In *Stair Ercuil* it is used frequently of centaurs, but also with reference to Hercules in the description of his club: *in sust foda fomordhae*.³⁰³ *Fomóir* could simply mean ‘giant’ in the MidIr period, and I would suggest this is the meaning here, as ‘Fomorian’ itself has a specific application already in this tale, with which Gerg would not be associated.

l. 206, *ardergna*: this is a compound formed from *ard* + *airgnae* ‘famous’. In adjectival compounds *ard* can either mean ‘very’ modifying the following adjective, or ‘high, noble’ in a dvandva compound alongside the following adjective. Presumably this is not *ar-* + *dergna* ‘very undistinguished’!

ll. 207–10, stanza 3: this stanza appears to me to have the same rhyme structure as the rest of the poem (a b; c d), although there are some difficulties with the rhyming words. In the rhyme *Gerg : feirg*, we have rhyme between a palatal and non-palatal consonant cluster, which gives a looser rhyme than the strict rule that consonants should share the same quality.³⁰⁴ In the MS, the final line is given as: *cen tlás na scaílfeá dot éis*. Thus the end-rhyme *bás : éis* is problematic, since vowels should strictly be identical. Note that Windisch argues that this stanza has a different rhyme scheme (b d, so *feirg : éis*) and so may be a later insertion.³⁰⁵ However, his argument is problematic since the vowels in *feirg : éis* are not identical with regard to quantity and *s* can only rhyme with itself.³⁰⁶ Moreover, Windisch then offers a further suggestion, that *cen tlás* should be moved to the end of 3d, which would provide a more exact rhyme with *bás*.

³⁰⁰ Murphy, *Early Irish Metrics*, p. 40.

³⁰¹ Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, p. 482, n. 2.

³⁰² *Cath Maige Rath* (ed. O’Donovan, p. 248).

³⁰³ *Stair Ercuil* (ed. Quin, ll. 464–5).

³⁰⁴ Murphy, *Early Irish Metrics*, p. 30.

³⁰⁵ Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, p. 536, n. to l. 268.

³⁰⁶ Murphy, *Early Irish Metrics*, p. 32.

Tlás means ‘feebleness, weakness’, and *cen tlás* is a common cheville; cf. *Ord Sacart*: *Dia téiss do thabairt chomna fri hidacht a mbáis, / rothoibge a coibsen a cen náire, cen tláis*;³⁰⁷ *Tochmarc Étaíne*: *[e]ad cian anbail gen tlas tair. / ria mbas d’agbail do Eochaid*;³⁰⁸ *Saltair na Rann*: *cluinem uait centris, centlas, / indfís cinnas dotarfas; tabraid forcobais centláis, / rad forais riandig tiugbais*;³⁰⁹ *Buile Shuibhne*: *rofhuilnges mor ttreas gan tlás / o rofhás clúmh ar mo chorp*.³¹⁰ If *cen tlás* refers to 3c (as it might in its position at the start of 3d), perhaps the sense ‘without weakness/weakening’ could be extended to ‘without ceasing’, thus: ‘that would not lament without ceasing’. If the line is rearranged so that *cen tlás* comes at the end, it would refer to *na scaílfea dot éis*, and might have the sense that Gerg’s host has been weakened by his death and must now scatter. Since *cen tlás* is a cheville, its position in the line could be easily moved around, and it does not necessarily have to hold much meaning within the line. Note that in *Ord Sacart* and *Saltair na Rann* cited above, the rhyme with *bás* is also found, which possibly supports the rearranging of the line. For these reasons, I have rearranged the last line of this stanza.

l. 208, *cā fróech na fíged fri feirg*: this literally means ‘what is the rage that would not boil with anger’, but it is unclear what this signifies. Presumably it is an expression of the reaction which Gerg’s killing is expected to provoke.

l. 210, *scaílfea*: Windisch suggests that this should be *leg. scaílfed*.³¹¹ This would then correspond to the secondary future in the preceding line, and *a* for *d* is an easy error. However, *scaílfea* makes sense as a future form in this context, so I will not emend.

l. 213: this line has eight syllables. Windisch suggests deleting *na*, but since the syllable count of the lines in this poem is variable, this is perhaps not necessary.³¹²

l. 215: this line has six syllables.

l. 215, *Ge[i]rg*: *Geirg* is the correct genitive form and so I have emended, although (as with ll. 207–8) this provides a looser rhyme with *Irard*, since the consonants are of different qualities.

ll. 217, 229: for these lines to have seven syllables, *is* must be read as ‘s’.

l. 222, *degairle*: according to eDIL, *airle* means ‘counsel’ rather than ‘counsellor’. However, since *comairle* can mean both, I would suggest that the same might be true of *airle*, which would make more sense in this context.

³⁰⁷ *Ord Sacart* (ed. Meyer, §41).

³⁰⁸ *Tochmarc Étaíne* (ed. Bergin and Best, p. 192).

³⁰⁹ *Saltair na Rann* (ed. Stokes, ll. 3315–16 and 3613–14).

³¹⁰ *Buile Shuibhne* (ed. O’Keeffe, §61).

³¹¹ Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, p. 482, n. 3.

³¹² *Ibid.*, p. 482, n. 4.

l. 222: in the MS *nó derganle* is written above the line, offering a variant to *degairle*. This suggests that at some point this version of the text was being compared with another slightly different version. There are other places where corrections or further clarifications are offered (e.g. ll. 101–5 *bidgais* ...; ll. 188–9 *.i. gilla Conchobair*), which possibly support this view. The rhyming word in 6c is *gráibri*, and *degairle* provides an imperfect rhyme as the vowel is short. Perhaps *derganle* was suggested to provide a rhyme with a long vowel, since the base form is *áindle* (although the length mark is not given in the MS).

Note that eDIL gives some examples where *áindle* possibly has a short vowel instead, and even suggests that these cases might represent a different word (although this is not attested in eDIL).³¹³ In the example from *Clann Ollaman Uaisle Emna*: *rí Ulad gér thruag a thaidbe / ropo dual don ainle a éc*, the rhyming word *thaidbe* has a short vowel and so might seem to confirm that *áindle* could sometimes have a short vowel.³¹⁴ However, the other example given in eDIL is this couplet from *TF*, where the rhyming word *gráibre* does have a length mark. Although eDIL observes that in *Druim Fíngin II*: *Sund rognid in graibre gel / airne i ndeochaid Fingen*, the same rhyming word *gráibre* is given without a length mark, rhyming with *airne* (also short vowel), I am not sure how useful this is, since *gráibre* does have a length mark in *TF*.³¹⁵ Therefore, I find the evidence inconclusive that *áindle* was viewed as having a short vowel in *TF*.

l. 223, *rop[s]at móra*: the MS reading is *ropat*, which is a pret 2sg form of the copula; however, this does not make sense in this line. Windisch claims that *ropat* could also be a pret 3pl form of the copula, and interprets *ropat* in 7ab as 3pl and in 7cd as 2sg.³¹⁶ However, eDIL does not seem to think that *ropat* is a pret 3pl form and suggests *leg. ropsat* for 7a.³¹⁷ *Ropsat* could easily have been mistakenly replaced with *ropat* here because of the surrounding lines.

Meanwhile, 7b could be translated with a 3pl verb (thus also requiring emendation), as: ‘your assemblies were excellent’ (*ségaínd* as an adj, *airechta* as nom pl). However, it also makes sense with a 2sg verb: ‘you were a champion of an assembly’ (*ségaínd* as a noun, *airechta* as gen sg), and so emendation is not necessary here.

l. 225, *rí rurech*: according to eDIL, in MidIr the term *ruiri* was applied to a subordinate or provincial king, while the *rí ruirech* was an overking, defined in the law-texts as a king whose authority was recognized throughout the country, including the Scandinavian seaports of Dublin, Waterford and

³¹³ eDIL, s.v. *áindle*.

³¹⁴ *Clann Ollaman Uaisle Emna* (ed. Byrne, §50).

³¹⁵ *Druim Fíngin II* (ed. Gwynn, ll. 21–2).

³¹⁶ Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, p. 536, n. to l. 281.

³¹⁷ eDIL, s.v. *l is*.

Limerick.³¹⁸ However, eDIL then states that ‘by extension, *rí ruirech* is applied to a secondary king’, which must be the usage found here, since Gerg is a subordinate king in Conchobar’s territory.³¹⁹

l. 232, *cor gab ... i n-Airidig*: Windisch argues that the article *in* (not *i n-*) is intended here, citing the parallel with the LL-poem, stanza 23cd: *co mboí ... triasin n-airidig*, and arguing that this is therefore a sign of influence of the LL-poem on the LL-prose.³²⁰ However, as the LL-poem example shows, we would expect nasalisation after the fem acc sg article, which is lacking in Poem V. Moreover, I would argue that the meanings of *gaibid* with a direct object do not work here, while *gaibid* + preposition *i n-* means ‘attacks’, which makes better sense. Therefore, I take this as the preposition *i* followed by nasalisation.

l. 235: this line has six syllables. Windisch suggests *leg. in gním gillai*, since Nuagel says in the preceding prose: *is mór in gním gillai do-ríngni Brod*.³²¹ Since *in gním gillai* seems to be a set phrase (see n. to l. 196), I follow this emendation.

l. 235, *can gess*: literally this means ‘without *geis*’, which seems to mean that Brod was not forced to kill Gerg by a *geis* (‘taboo, prohibition’) but did it of his own accord, which increases his culpability.³²² For discussion of this form of *gess*, see ‘Linguistic Analysis’, p. 14.

l. 237, *rinne*: for his interpretation of *rinne*, Windisch cites O’Clery’s glossary: *Rinne .i. Eirinn* ‘Ireland’; *rí uas Rinne .i. rí uas Eirinn* ‘a king over Ireland’;³²³ thus his suggested translation is: ‘einen König von Irland (?) zu tödten’.³²⁴ However, O’Clery’s glossary is a late text (dating to 1643) and so provides problematic evidence. eDIL suggests that this might instead be prep *re* + pron 1pl; although it suggests this is MidIr *ri* for *fri*, I would suggest that the meaning of *re* ‘before, in front of’ also works here.³²⁵

l. 238, *ro marb sé sinni 7 sé*: the sense of this is that by killing Gerg, Brod has put everyone in Dúnad Geirg at risk, and indeed by the conclusion of the tale, all of his family and followers have also died.

l. 238: as at the end of all the poems in this text, the MS reading repeats the *dúnad* at the end of the poem (presumably to reinforce the identification of the *dúnad*). The repeated *dúnad* here is *Is é*, echoing the poem’s opening *Iss é* (in form although not in meaning: copula vs *ocus*); however, the end of the actual poem is written in the MS as *7 sé*. The repeated *dúnad* (*Is é*) indicates that *7 sé* in the poem

³¹⁸ See Thurneysen, ‘Aus dem irischen Recht I’, p. 341.

³¹⁹ eDIL, s.v. *ruiri*.

³²⁰ Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, pp. 459 and 524.

³²¹ *TF*, l. 196: ‘great was the servant’s deed which Brod performed’; Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, p. 484, n. 1.

³²² On *geis*, see O’Leary, ‘Honour-bound’; Charles-Edwards, ‘Geis’; Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden- und Königsage*, p. 80.

³²³ O’Clery’s *Irish Glossary*, G–U (ed. Miller, p. 36).

³²⁴ Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, p. 536, n. to l. 295; p. 485.

³²⁵ eDIL, s.v. *?2 rinne*.

should be expanded to *is sé* rather than *ocus sé*, providing a *dúnad* which resembles but does not exactly match the poem's opening words *iss é*.

This line contains an analytic verbal form, which is a late MidIr feature.³²⁶ One might argue that this was a later addition to the poem, since the form *ro marb* still means the same without the subject pronoun. However, this line would then only have six syllables (unless *7* is expanded to *ocus* which seems unlikely given the argument above). Moreover, this is not the only incidence of analytic verbal forms in this text, while Poem V itself contains a range of other MidIr features (such as the form of the conjugated preposition *re* + pron 1pl (l. 215), the form *rot gáet* (l. 229), the independent object pronoun *sinni* (l. 238)). Therefore, it is likely that this poem always contained the analytic form and is of a late date of composition.

Poem VI. Otherworldly woman and Medb's dialogue

The rhyme scheme is a b, c d, so this is a type of *deibide* metre, as defined by Murphy. With the exception of 3d, there are seven syllables per line. The couplets vary between a $7^x 7^{x+1}$ type of metre and a $7^x 7^x$ type (where x can be either 1 or 2 syllables depending on the couplet). There is infrequent use of alliteration.

l. 275, *fáth imne*: this is what is given in the MS, which makes sense as it stands, since *fáith* means 'seer, prophet', while *imne* is a form of the adverb *amein* 'thus, in that way', so: 'proficient as a prophet thus'. However, Windisch suggests *leg. fáthsine*, a form of *fáitsine* 'prophecy',³²⁷ which he supports with reference to the preceding prose: *dāa mbeth fástini ocut*.³²⁸ This would have been an easy scribal error to make through minim confusion if the *s* had lost its descender. Nevertheless, I would argue that the correspondence between the structure of the two phrases is not close enough to support the emendation, since the text given in the MS also makes sense. This gives a structure of $7^2 7^2$, instead of $7^3 7^2$, which seems more likely since none of the couplets in the *TF* verse have a longer end-word in the first line than the second.

l. 277, *bulid*: eDIL states that *bulid* is a 'laudatory adj. of imprecise meaning, usually alliterating and/or rhyming' – here it provides alliteration.³²⁹

l. 284: this line has eight syllables. Windisch suggests that *for* should be omitted.³³⁰ This seems plausible, since *do-fich* (or its simplex *toglaid*) seems invariably to take a direct object, while there are no attestations with *for*, and the rest of this poem consistently has seven-syllable lines.

³²⁶ See 'Linguistic Analysis', p. 19.

³²⁷ Windisch, 'Tochmarc Ferbe', p. 488, n. 1.

³²⁸ *TF*, l. 269: 'if you had the gift of prophecy'.

³²⁹ eDIL, s.v. *bulid*.

³³⁰ Windisch, 'Tochmarc Ferbe', p. 488, n. 2.

l. 284, *Geirg*: in the MS this line ends with .g. – the correct grammatical expansion would be *Geirg*, but then this would give a palatal with a non-palatal rhyme *Geirg* : *ferg*. Diplom. expands to *Gerg*, while Windisch suggests *leg. fe[i]rg*.³³¹ Either is possible: I have selected the emendation to the correct acc sg form *feirg*. However, note that there are several places in this text where *Gerg* lacks the palatal consonant one would expect, and where it is problematic in rhyme (cf. ll. 99, 207, 215).

l. 285: for this line to have seven syllables, *is* must be read as 's.

l. 291, *commus a chind*: literally this line means 'he will not have power of his head', which does not seem to make sense. The only plausible meaning seems to be 'control of his mind', although *cenn* is not attested elsewhere as meaning 'mind'. Even if we accept this translation of *cenn*, the meaning is still uncertain, unless it is a reference to Maine's earlier reckless behaviour. Perhaps it is foretelling that he will lose his head, i.e. be beheaded.

l. 298, *Ól nÉcmacht*: this is a poetic name for the Connachta.³³² An explanation is provided in *Cóir Anmann*.³³³

Poem VII. Ferb's first lament for Maine

This is by far the longest poem in *TF*. Most lines resemble *deibide scaílte*, although 1ab, 4ab, 7ab, 10ab, 17ab and 18ab differ in that the rhyme is between words with the same number of syllables. There are mostly seven syllables per line, although also several lines of five, six or eight syllables, many of which cannot be easily accounted for. There is some use of alliteration, (e.g. 2c *a meic Medba in murir*; 9c *corot gēit in gaī glan glē*). Repetition is used to link the last line of stanza 11 with the first of stanza 12.

l. 341, *ó tig*: Windisch suggests that this should be *leg. ó[t] tig*, which is a plausible emendation since it would be easy for the *t* to be assimilated.³³⁴

l. 344, *'n aidchi*: I take this as an abbreviated form of the fem definite article + acc sg of *adaig*, used adverbially as an accusative of time. Although one would expect nasalisation after the article, eDIL does give examples where this nasalisation is missing; alternatively, this *'n* might indicate the nasalisation as well as the abbreviated article.

l. 348, *ní latt in gním ro maídis*: the verbal form seems to be perf 2sg of *moídid* 'boasts', thus: 'it is not with/by you the deed of which you have boasted', i.e. you did not perform the deed of which you boasted (?). Although the meaning of this is obscure (and less complimentary than might be expected), it might be a reference to Maine's boast to Bricriu that he would return to Crúachain after a

³³¹ Diplom., l. 33764; Windisch, '*Tochmarc Ferbe*', p. 488, n. 2.

³³² Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden- und Königsage*, p. 76.

³³³ CA (ed. Arbuthnot, II, §79).

³³⁴ Windisch, '*Tochmarc Ferbe*', p. 494, n. 4.

feast of three days, or to his implied promise to marry Ferb, both of which his death prevented him from achieving.

ll. 349–50, *chlí* : *bithligí*: Breatnach notes that a length mark has been placed on the short unaccented vowel to make the rhyme between *rinn* and *airdrinn* clearer.³³⁵

l. 351, *at-chonna[r]c*: The MS reading is *at-chonnac*, which is a MidIr perf 1sg form. However, Windisch suggests *leg. atchonnarc*.³³⁶ This emendation is plausible since it improves the rhyme and is a more common form than *at-chonnac*.

l. 352, *slat*: this means ‘rod’, and can have a ceremonial function, referring to a staff of office or a symbol of royal power, as it presumably does here.

l. 352, *fri hadart*: *adart* means ‘pillow’. It can be found in the phrase *bás fri hadart*, ‘lit. death against a pillow, i.e. a natural as opposed to a violent death’.³³⁷ However, despite the use of *fri* in 4b, this cannot be the allusion intended, since Maine did have a violent death. *Adart* can also have an extended meaning of a ‘rest for weapons’ (cf. *Aided Guill 7 Gairb*: *racoraigit ... a claidbe fora n-adartaib*), so possibly this refers to some kind of stand or cushion on which a *slat* might be presented.³³⁸

ll. 353–4, *dál*: this means ‘meeting’, including in the sense of ‘a hostile meeting, an encounter (in combat)’, which seems to be the meaning implied in the first line of the couplet, referring to Maine’s encounter with Conchobar. However, the phrase *dál báis* means ‘a meeting with death’; cf. *Aided Chonchobuir*: *co rosfargbais i ndáil báis*,³³⁹ *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne*: *ria ndul i ndáil báis*,³⁴⁰ *Two Deaths*: *conid foichlidhi do cachæn in dal derb 7 an dal inn[derb ... a]ra chind .i. dail bais*.³⁴¹ This is the implication in the second line of the couplet. Thus there is wordplay with the various meanings of *dál* here, since this was not just Maine’s encounter with Conchobar, but also his encounter with death, i.e. his last encounter. Comparisons may be made with *Fingal Rónáin*, where the dying Máel Fhothartaig swears *darsin dáil i tiag-sa .i. dál báis* (the wordplay contains tragic irony since he has been killed on account of his supposed *dál* ‘tryst’ with Rónán’s wife),³⁴² and Cú Chulainn’s lament for Fer Diad in *TBC-LL*, l. 3441: *dursan do dál dédenach*, since, like Maine, Fer Diad’s encounter in battle was also his encounter with death.

l. 356, *íars[m]a*: the MS reading is *íarsla*. Windisch suggests a comparison with *íarsála* ‘retinue, attendance’ (cf. *Fled Bricrend*: *co m-bad hit íarsála no beth bantocht Ulad*).³⁴³ However,

³³⁵ *SnG*, p. 230.

³³⁶ Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, p. 496, n. 2.

³³⁷ *eDIL*, s.v. *adart*.

³³⁸ *Aided Guill 7 Gairb* (ed. Stokes, §47).

³³⁹ *Aided Chonchobuir* (ed. Meyer, p. 20).

³⁴⁰ *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne* (ed. Jackson, l. 334).

³⁴¹ *Two Deaths* (ed. Marstrander, p. 120).

³⁴² *Fingal Rónáin* (ed. Greene, ll. 148–9).

³⁴³ Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, p. 539, n. to l. 455; *Fled Bricrend* (ed. Windisch, p. 260).

‘retinue’ does not make sense in this context, since the verb is 2sg so that this would be ‘you were the retinue of the Fomorians’. Meanwhile, eDIL suggests *leg. íarsma* ‘the after-effects, the result (always in bad sense)’;³⁴⁴ cf. *AnS*, l. 4870: *íarsma na sleige sin; Fís Mherlino: an dían-íarsma bhí le h-imirt orra* (punishment of sinners)³⁴⁵ – see also the seemingly related word *íarsna* ‘(bad) consequence, outcome’; cf. *Bruiden Da Choca: mór sárglond nos-nasæ bás, / íarsná glonn for crith ’na crích*.³⁴⁶ In considering the extended applications of *íarsma* in this context, one could consider the synonym *íartaige*, which includes the meaning ‘fate, unhappy end’, since here the sense seems to be that Maine caused the ‘unhappy end’ of the Fomorians, i.e. by killing them.

l. 358, *sochaide i tñnac thimchell*: see n. to l. 197 for a discussion of the relative in this phrase. Since the prepositional phrase *i timchell* means ‘concerning, on account of, for the sake of’, this line must mean ‘a multitude on whose behalf you came’.

l. 360, *comaltach*: this seems to be an adjective derived from *comalnad* ‘act of fulfilling (duty, obligation etc.)’ (verbal noun of *comalnaithir* ‘fulfils’); cf. *Cath Airtig: bat comaltach ferbbai fri n-oithib* (.i. *ba mait[h] do briat[h]ar*);³⁴⁷ *Diambad messe bad rí réil: combad chomaltach mo recht*.³⁴⁸ Here it seems to be used to describe one who fulfils his duties.

l. 365, *cen chess*: *ces* means ‘debility, sickness’ and is used with reference to *Noínden Ulad* ‘the Debility of the Ulaid’ in *TBC*. It occurs frequently in chevilles; cf. e.g. *Betha Máedóc Ferna II: moid gan ces*;³⁴⁹ *Suidiugud Tellaig Temra: fosfúair is tulaig cen cheas*;³⁵⁰ *Duanaire Finn: do raidh Conán Maol gan cheis*;³⁵¹ *Vita S. Columbae: imdha airne cen cesa*;³⁵² *Auraicept na nÉces: cen chessa*.³⁵³ Since, as a cheville, its meaning varies according to context, here I interpret it as ‘love without failing’.

l. 366: this line has five syllables.

l. 368, *a gillai sea*: this use of the demonstrative pron after the vocative is attested in eDIL;³⁵⁴ cf. e.g. *Ermahnung den Leib zu kasteien: a c[h]uirp-seo*;³⁵⁵ *Betha Máedóc Ferna II: a chliar sa*.³⁵⁶

³⁴⁴ eDIL, s.v. *?íarsla*.

³⁴⁵ *Fís Mherlino* (ed. Macalister, §3, n. 27).

³⁴⁶ *Bruiden Da Choca*, Recension A (ed. Toner, ll. 679–80).

³⁴⁷ *Cath Airtig* (ed. Best, §3).

³⁴⁸ *Diambad messe bad rí réil* (Diplom., l. 18670).

³⁴⁹ *Betha Máedóc Ferna II* (ed. Plummer, §214).

³⁵⁰ *Suidiugud Tellaig Temra* (ed. Best, p. 158).

³⁵¹ *Duanaire Finn II* (ed. Murphy, p. 242).

³⁵² *Vita S. Columbae* (ed. Reeves, p. 286).

³⁵³ *Auraicept na nÉces* (ed. Calder, l. 2225).

³⁵⁴ eDIL, s.v. *l so*, (c).

³⁵⁵ *Ermahnung den Leib zu kasteien* (ed. Meyer, §17).

³⁵⁶ *Betha Máedóc Ferna II* (ed. Plummer, §276).

l. 372, *nó cono tarla is tū secmarb*: this line has eight syllables. I take *is* as the contraction of *ocus* (as Breatnach does),³⁵⁷ thus the second half of the line would be: ‘and you stark dead’. *Tarla* (perf 3sg of *do-cuirethar*) here seems to be used in the MidIr sense of ‘comes to pass, happens, takes place’, thus: ‘until it happened’. The role of the second *no* is puzzling, since *tarla* already contains the particle *ro*; however, in MidIr *tarla* seems to be treated as if it were the conjunct form of a simple verb (cf. *Merugud Uilix*: *ro tarlait a teinnti*).³⁵⁸ Therefore, we might take this as MidIr *no* for *ro*. Alternatively, Windisch suggests *leg. conot tarla*, so possibly *no* was used to infix a 2sg pronoun which was then assimilated with *tarla*.³⁵⁹ Note that this line has eight syllables, and so a case might be made for omitting the second *no*. On the other hand, both *nó co* and *co* mean ‘until’, and so one might equally omit the first *nó*. This latter emendation is supported by the fact that 9b–10c seem to form a run of connected verbs, and all the following lines have the pattern *coro* ..., perhaps suggesting that this should also be *leg. coro* (omitting *nó*). The sense of 9ab seems to be: ‘It was rare for you to be without your weapon, until it came to pass (i.e. that you were without your weapon) and [that was because] you were stark dead’ (or with the infix: ‘until it happened to you’, i.e. to be without your weapon).

ll. 376–7: both lines have eight syllables, although in the case of l. 377, *immut* could be abbreviated to *’mmut*.

l. 377, *coro gabsat immut uli*: in this line, *uli* could be the subject or object of the verb: thus ‘they took all (i.e. Maine’s followers)’, or ‘they all went (i.e. Maine’s killers)’. Moreover, *athig* in the following line could refer to the subject or object of *ro gabsat*, although it is perhaps more likely to refer to the subject, as *aithech* often seems to be negative (‘churl’), while even when it is more neutral it means ‘commoner’, which seems an uncomplimentary way to refer to Maine’s followers. Therefore, I suggest that both *uli* and *athig* refer to Maine’s killers, the subject of *ro gabsat*.

l. 388, *is mór dom-ber i n-imšnám*: Breatnach interprets this as a rare example of a nasalising relative *do-mber*, translating it as ‘it is a great number that it grieves’.³⁶⁰ Alternatively, this might be interpreted as *do-beir* + infixed pron 1sg, in the phrase *do-beir* + *i*, ‘with pers. obj., brings, puts (into a state or condition)’ – although note that one would expect a Class C pron here so this would be MidIr confusion of pronoun classes.³⁶¹ Note that eDIL gives other examples of this usage of *do-beir* + *i* alongside *snám*, which supports this interpretation; cf. Cináed úa Hartacáin’s poem on Brugh na Bóinne: *o dot-rat i socht, i snám*,³⁶² *How Samson slew the Gesteda: dosrat a snim mor immorro sloigh na nGeistedha umannisin*.³⁶³ Moreover, a similar use of *do-beir* + *i* has arguably been used in l. 412.

³⁵⁷ *SnG*, p. 331.

³⁵⁸ *Merugud Uilix* (ed. Meyer, l. 15).

³⁵⁹ Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, p. 496, n. 4.

³⁶⁰ *SnG*, p. 287.

³⁶¹ eDIL, s.v. *do-beir*, II (e) (iv).

³⁶² Poem on Brugh na Bóinne (ed. Gwynn, §48).

³⁶³ *How Samson slew the Gesteda* (ed. Marstrander, ll. 5–6).

l. 389, *dar ēis*: this is a prepositional phrase meaning ‘behind; after, resulting from; after the departure of; for, instead of’, so it requires a noun or pronoun to accompany it. Since the line only has six syllables, I would support Windisch’s suggested emendation to *dara ēis*.³⁶⁴ Presumably the infix here is proleptic, referring to the following line.

l. 393: this line has six syllables, although as Windisch observes, ‘*s i laech* could have been read as *is i laech*’.³⁶⁵ I take *í* in this line as the preposition *i* with a hair stroke marking a single-syllable word, thus: ‘it is into a warrior that he thrust it’.

l. 396, *ro gab úad i n-etarcén: etercían* as an adjective means ‘far, distant, remote’, and as a substantive ‘distance’. With the preposition *i*, this literally means ‘in distance’, i.e. far. I take Conchobar as the implied subject here (he is mentioned in the preceding stanza), thus: ‘his sword, which Conchobar took far from him’. Alternatively, eDIL takes *claideb* as the subject: ‘his sword, which is (now) far from him’ (presumably taking *gaibid* in the meaning ‘goes’).³⁶⁶

l. 401, *ros [g]ab*: the MS reading is *roscab*. Diplom. suggests *leg. ros gab*, thus: ‘when one seized them’.³⁶⁷ On the other hand, there is a verb *scabaid* ‘disperses, scatters’, so perhaps this is ‘when one scattered them’. Alternatively, this might be a sg verb with a pl antecedent, which starts to occur in relative clauses in MidIr.³⁶⁸ This would then have to be read with the following line (*leg. ros gab*): ‘great their sighing; when they began defending him, they fell’. The infix would have to be proleptic: ‘when they began it, i.e. defending him’.

l. 404: this line has five syllables. Windisch suggests adding *hé-sium*, so: *Hé-sium féni – noco bréc – / hé-sium ro fodail mór sét*.³⁶⁹ However, note that 7d also only has five syllables and so the number of syllables per line was not strictly enforced in this poem.

l. 405, *nī lugu do-rochair de*: literally this seems to mean ‘none the less of it he fell’. Presumably this refers to the preceding line and has the sense ‘in spite of it he fell’, i.e. Maine was killed in spite of giving gifts to his followers. This may contain some irony in that he fell *oc cosnam a muntire*, when his gift-giving should have meant that they were defending him; on the other hand, this line also echoes the preceding stanza (‘*ca chosnam da-rochratar*’), so perhaps the image intended is more one of mutual loyalty (and so tragedy). A similar useage is found with the superlative form of the adjective in *Scáthán Shacramuinte na hAithridhe: muna rabha sí ann go follus, ní as lúgha de, bíodh sí a bhfolach*.³⁷⁰

³⁶⁴ Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, p. 498, n. 2.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 498, n. 3.

³⁶⁶ eDIL, s.v. *etercían*.

³⁶⁷ Diplom., p. 1149, n. 4.

³⁶⁸ *SnG*, p. 331.

³⁶⁹ Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, p. 500, n. 1.

³⁷⁰ *Scáthán Shacramuinte na hAithridhe* (ed. Ó Maonaigh, ll. 2210–11).

l. 408, *glaini*: *glaine* means ‘purity’ and, although there are no examples of this in eDIL, I suggest that here it is being used as an epithet to mean ‘the purest one’.

l. 412, *dom-rat i ndrochbeirt*: this seems to be a similar use of *do-beir* + *i* to that found in l. 388, although here *bert* ‘burden’ is problematic since it is not exactly a state or condition. However, *bert* has a figurative meaning ‘burden, i.e. of grief’ (cf. e.g. *The Book of Clanranald*: *bert ghóimhe*;³⁷¹ *Dioghluim Dána*: *do bhrígh na beirte* (translated by eDIL as: ‘because of the burden (of oppression)’);³⁷² *gár mheisde ... / a sgarad re a mbeirtibh bróin*;³⁷³ *Saltair na Rann*: *beirt pían*.³⁷⁴ Although it tends to be followed by a qualifying noun, perhaps *bert* could be extended in this case to mean grief itself, which is a state, thus: ‘it has put me into an evil burden of grief’, i.e. it has grieved me cruelly. Alternatively, this might be compared with l. 587: *dot-rat i ndrochlepaid* ‘has brought you to a disastrous bed’, thus: ‘has brought me to an evil burden’, although the question of what this ‘burden’ is still remains (perhaps referring to the burden of living with a broken heart). It should also be noted that this line has six syllables and so Windisch suggests *leg. dom-ratad*, thus: ‘I have been brought’.³⁷⁵ Although there are a number of lines with irregular syllable-count in this poem, this emendation is plausible, and arguably makes more sense since, unlike l. 388, there is nothing in this stanza to supply the ‘it’ that has brought her into grief.

Poem VIII. Ferb and Fíannamail’s dialogue

Most lines resemble *deibide scaílte*, although 1ab, 2ab, 3ab, 13ab and 15ab differ in that the rhyme is between words with the same number of syllables. With a few exceptions (e.g. 7a, 8a), there are mostly seven syllables per line. There is infrequent use of alliteration, mostly only occurring in epithets (e.g. 4bc *mo chomthach*, *mo chocēile*, / *mo rí*, *mo ruirí*).

l. 424, *fri muntir*: Windisch suggests that this should be *leg. frim muntir*.³⁷⁶ Although the assimilation of the *m* would be an easy error, the phrase makes sense as it stands and so I will not emend.

l. 424, *mét ñgal*: Windisch argues that the *ñ* before *gal* should be deleted, since it has intruded from the preceding line, *grés ñgér*.³⁷⁷ Although this cannot be a fossilised neuter as *mét* is fem, it might have been influenced by fossilised neuters in other chevilles.

l. 427, *fint[er]-su*: the MS reading is *fintat-sum*, which would be pres subj 3pl of *ro-finnadar*: ‘although they may not know it’. As it stands, this would refer to the following line, i.e. they do not

³⁷¹ *Book of Clanranald* (ed. MacBain and Kennedy, p. 268).

³⁷² eDIL, s.v. *l bert*.

³⁷³ *Dioghluim Dána* (ed. McKenna, pp. 231 and 251).

³⁷⁴ *Saltair na Rann* (ed. Stokes, l. 7171).

³⁷⁵ Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, p. 500, n. 2.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 500, n. 3.

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 539, n. to l. 525.

know the outcome of the battle because they have all been killed. However, the rhyme *munter-su* : *fintat-sum* is problematic, so I suggest emending to *finter-su*, pres subj 2sg: ‘although you may not know it’. This would then refer to the preceding lines, where Fíannamail does not recognise his kinsmen and Ferb identifies them for him.

l. 442, *uchān, achān air*: *air* might be the conjunction *ar*, *air* ‘for, since’, which would then run on into the following line: ‘for do you not know’. However, it would be unusual for a line to end with a conjunction belonging to the next line. Alternatively, this may be the conjugated preposition *ar* + pron 3sg masc (a MidIr form showing influence from the conjugated forms of *for*),³⁷⁸ thus: ‘woe, alas on account of it’ (i.e. that Maine has fallen) – although *uchān* is not usually found with a preposition. In any case, this line has five syllables and so it is possible that something is missing from this line that would make it clearer.

l. 446: this line has six syllables.

l. 455, *imarlén*: eDIL suggests that this might mean ‘great injury, great grief’, formed from the intensifying prefix *immar-* + *lén* ‘injury’.³⁷⁹ It is only attested in chevilles; cf. *Der Ursprung des gregorianischen Kirchengesangs: secht mbliadna go leith gan lēn isan Rōimh gan imarlēn*.³⁸⁰

The implication of *cen imarlén* here seems to be that the Ulaid have done something which places guilt on them (namely attacking Dúnad Geirg), without any injury having been done to them to have provoked their actions – and indeed this is true, since Conchobar was motivated by ‘pre-revenge’ for the *Táin*, which has not happened yet.

l. 463, *cā n-anmand*: this looks as if the poss pron 3pl *a* has been assimilated with *cā*, since there is nasalisation, and it is required for the sense. This would not affect the syllable count because of elision.

l. 467: for this line to have seven syllables, *is íat* must be read as *’s íat*.³⁸¹

l. 469, *imcén*: Windisch suggests *leg. imchéin*.³⁸² However, eDIL gives several examples where the *c* seems to be eclipsed, which O’Brien explains as a contamination of *i n-imchian* and *i gcéin*;³⁸³ cf. *CRR*, §26: *rop imgen ra Conchobar 7 ra Ultu robói in fer sain ’n-a écmais*; *Oided mac nUisnig: co clos fo imcen na crich*;³⁸⁴ *Bretha Éitgid: darna fetar dul ... cen imcein criche*.³⁸⁵ Therefore, I do not think this needs emending.

³⁷⁸ eDIL, s.v. *l ar*.

³⁷⁹ eDIL, s.v. *immarlén*.

³⁸⁰ *Der Ursprung des gregorianischen Kirchengesangs* (ed. Meyer, §20).

³⁸¹ Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, p. 504, n. 1; see Murphy, *Early Irish Metrics*, p. 40.

³⁸² Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, p. 504, n. 2.

³⁸³ O’Brien, ‘*Varia IV*’, p. 170.

³⁸⁴ *Oided mac nUisnig* (ed. Stokes, l. 89).

³⁸⁵ *Bretha Éitgid* (CIH 295.56–7).

l. 474, *Mani ro guin Chonchobar*: Breatnach takes this as *maniro guin*,³⁸⁶ however, I would argue that this is Maine's name (*Mani* is the usual spelling throughout the text, cf. 15c), since 'if he has not wounded Conchobar' does not make sense here as Maine did wound Conchobar, and this is the answer to Fíannamail's question in 14a.

l. 475: this line has six syllables. Windisch suggests *leg. nirbo*: although *nirb* is also a perf 3sg form of the copula, it would be easy for the *o* to have been assimilated and so I will emend here.³⁸⁷

Poem IX. Ferb's lament for the Connachta

This poem is noteworthy for how much it differs from the other poems in *TF*. Firstly, it is much more elaborate in terms of its metrical features. Moreover, as Windisch notes, 'unterscheidet sich das IX. Gedicht durch dunkle Ausdrücke von den übrigen', containing 'besonders viele idiomatische Wendungen'.³⁸⁸ Notable examples include *léim cen follacht* (1c), *béim dar amarc* (1d) and *is [sn]ithe serb far snáthe* (2d).

The rhyme scheme is different to all the other poems in the text: a c; b d. This metre is a type of *rannaigeacht* metre, as defined by Murphy; although Murphy states that normally it is only b and d that rhyme with one another, in more elaborate examples, a and c can also rhyme.³⁸⁹ In stanzas 1, 3, 4, 6 and 9, each line ends in a rhyming word of two syllables: this resembles the common metre *rannaigeacht bec* (or *rannaigeacht recomarcach*), $7^2 7^2 7^2 7^2$ (Murphy's Metre 16). However, in stanzas 5, 7 and 8 the pattern is $7^1 7^{2/3} 7^1 7^{2/3}$ (if we assume 5c should have seven syllables (see below)). While this could be a different type of *rannaigeacht* metre (such as *rannaigeacht chummaisc* or *cummasc rannaigeachta móire ocus casbairdne* (Murphy's Metres 17 and 18)), it happens that these stanzas could equally be analysed as a *deibide* metre, with a b; c d rhyme and a rhyme of *rinn* with *airdrinn*, although the mixing of these two types of metre within a single poem would be highly unusual.

Another metrical feature of the poem is the prevalence of consonance. Consonance differs from rhyme mainly in that corresponding stressed vowels do not need to be identical, except with regard to their quantity.³⁹⁰ In all stanzas, the end-word of every line has consonance with the end-words of all the other lines. This may explain the structure of stanza 2, where none of the end-words rhyme (except a with d). However, since they all have long vowels, they do all have consonance with one another. Consonance is not usually a substitute for rhyme, instead providing an additional ornament; however, the poet seems to be using it in a similar way to rhyme here.

³⁸⁶ *SnG*, p. 238.

³⁸⁷ Windisch, 'Tochmarc Ferbe', p. 504, n. 3.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 449 and 540, n. to l. 590.

³⁸⁹ Murphy, *Early Irish Metrics*, p. 46.

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 34–5.

Windisch also notes that there is internal rhyme in this poem: 1cd *léim* : *béim*, 2cd *delb* : *serb*, 3ab *ruisc* : *cuisic*, 3cd *leo* : *gleo*, 4ab *cét* : *-rép*, 4cd *scél* : *dér*, 8cd *cóir* : *dóib*, 9cd *Chonnacht* : *tromalt*.³⁹¹ There is infrequent use of alliteration, more prevalent in some stanzas than others (for example, stanzas 2, 4 and 9). Finally, the poet also links stanzas 2 and 3, and 7 and 8, by repeating the last word of the last line as the first word of the next stanza (*snáthe*, *uallach*).

l. 488, *lēm*: Windisch suggests *leg. léim*.³⁹² Although this would be easy minim confusion, eDIL does contain several examples with the spelling *lēm*, so I will not emend.

There seems to be wordplay in this line, using *léim* to refer to the passing from life to death (cf. the use of *dál* in ll. 353–4); cf. *An Crínóc*: *īar n-ar lēm ōr colainn crīn*;³⁹³ *Caithréim Thoirdhealbhaigh*: *go bfuair [sin] Tadhg Luimnig léim*;³⁹⁴ *Dánta Philip Bhoicht*: *léim fan lia; léim na huaidhe*.³⁹⁵

l. 488, *follacht*: eDIL suggests that this is a form of *fuilliucht* ‘trace, impress or mark’, and that *cen follacht* ‘without trace’ implies that their deaths were futile.³⁹⁶ Alternatively, it could be a comment on the transience of life.

l. 489, *dar amarc*: eDIL gives two citations containing the phrase *dar amarc*, which it claims support the translation ‘out of sight’: this citation from *TF*, *béim dar amarc*, which eDIL translates as ‘a blow from behind’, and *seinm cruite dara hamarc* ‘playing a harp without being able to see it (of an uncertain friendship)’.³⁹⁷ However, the interpretation of the second citation has been challenged by O Daly, who translates it as ‘playing on a harp although it is damaged’ (based on 2 *amarc* ‘defect, disfigurement’).³⁹⁸ This weakens eDIL’s argument that *dar amarc* was a proverbial expression, as ‘in spite of damage’ does not make sense in the *TF* context and so these two citations do not seem to be related. However, ‘out of sight’ may still be an appropriate translation for the *TF* context, although I would prefer the interpretation ‘unexpected’ or ‘underhand’ to ‘a blow from behind’.

l. 491, *i cend clēthe*: there are several options for what the nominative of *clethe* (gen sg) could be: *clēithe* ‘ridge-pole; building; the heavens; top; matter of importance; fig. perfection, chief, head’; *l cleth* ‘tree; house-post, pole; spear; fig. warrior, chief’; 2 *cleth* ‘act of hiding, concealment, deception’; *clíath* ‘hurdle; wattle panels; woven fence’. Also *i cend* could be the prepositional phrase ‘towards, against’; or prep *i* + noun ‘head; end; chief, leader’.

I think the most likely is *clíath* ‘hurdle; wattle panels; woven fence’, which includes in its metaphorical meanings ‘freq. of the close ranks of men (and weapons) in battle’;³⁹⁹ e.g. translated by

³⁹¹ Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, pp. 540–1, n. to l. 590.

³⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 506, n. 1.

³⁹³ *An Crínóc* (ed. Meyer, §10).

³⁹⁴ *Caithréim Thoirdhealbhaigh* (ed. O’Grady, I, p. 122).

³⁹⁵ *Dánta Philip Bhoicht* (ed. McKenna, pp. 6 and 11).

³⁹⁶ eDIL, s.v. *fuilliucht*.

³⁹⁷ eDIL, s.v. *l amarc*.

³⁹⁸ *Beir Mo Scíath, Scëo Fri Úäth* (ed. and transl. O Daly, §9).

³⁹⁹ eDIL, s.v. *clíath*.

O'Donovan as 'phalanx' in *Cath Maige Rath: d'fisirugad clethi Conaill*.⁴⁰⁰ *I cend* could be prep + noun here: 'at the head of a phalanx', but I think it is more likely to be the prepositional phrase, as can be seen in another example of *clíath* used in a different extended application (as 'wicker-work bridge') in *The Annals of Tigernach: tucadh amus fair im cend cleithe Atha Luain*.⁴⁰¹

1. 492, *dígle*: Windisch suggests the translation 'glänzende' for *dígle*, citing O'Reilly's dictionary: *díghle* 'very pure, immaculate' (based on the adjective *glé* 'clear, bright').⁴⁰² However, *díglé* (*dí* + *glé*) ends in a long vowel and so will not work for the rhyme in this stanza. Therefore, I suggest that this is gen sg of *dígal* 'avenging, vengeance', thus: 'of vengeance', i.e. vengeful. The more usual spelling would be *dígl(e)*, but this spelling *dígle* may be a result of MidIr confusion of unstressed final vowels.

1. 493, *is [sn]íthe serb far snáthe*: the MS reading is *fríthe*, but it is difficult to determine what this would mean. In legal texts, *fríthe* is a technical term for 'a find, estray, waif'.⁴⁰³ Although in English 'estrays, waifs' conveys the sense of something lost, in Irish the focus seems to be on something found, since *fríthe* is the past participle of *fo-gaib* 'finds'. Possibly the sense of something lost remains, on the principle that if someone has found something, someone else has lost it, so that this might be 'your life-thread is a bitter loss'. However, used in a more generalised or figurative sense, *fríthe* seems to have positive connotations: 'a lucky find, a treasure trove, an unexpected gain'. Perhaps here the use of *fríthe* is ironic, referring to an unexpected find, but one that is negative not positive. An example where *fríthe* may have a negative connotation is in *Mac Coissi cecinit: ní lé féin an fríthe fúair* (in the context of one who has lost a child).⁴⁰⁴ Here the sense seems to be that 'the find [i.e. child] was not hers' because she did not get to keep it for long, and possibly the same connotation may be present in *TF*.

Another possibility is that *fríthe* should be *leg. sníthe* (since *fr* for *sn* would be an easy error); this might be either the past participle or conditional passive sg of *sníth* 'spins'. There is an example of *snáithe* (as 'life-thread') combined with *sníthe* (here conditional passive sg) in *Leabhar Cloinne Aodha Buidhe: céile deabhtha i ndiaidh do ghona / gerr go sníthe snáithe a ré* ('his [i.e. your adversary's] thread of life would soon be spun'), meaning that he would soon die.⁴⁰⁵ The related concepts of *sníth* 'spins', *snáithe* 'life-thread' and *saegul* 'lifetime' are attested in classical adaptations (in relation to *na Parc* 'the Fates', Lat. *Parcae*); cf. e.g. *Togail na Tebe: rothescad snaitheada bar saegail ag na Parchip iferndaig ... bean ag snim an tsnaithi ... in tres ben ic tescad int snaithi*;⁴⁰⁶ *CCath*, ll. 4180–1: *na tri Parc* *ifernaide bite icc snim saeguil gac[h] aen duinne isin domun*. This may support this emendation

⁴⁰⁰ *Cath Maige Rath* (ed. and transl. O'Donovan, p. 176).

⁴⁰¹ *Annals of Tigernach* 1146 (ed. and transl. Stokes, p. 167).

⁴⁰² Windisch, 'Tochmarc Ferbe', pp. 507 and 541, n. to l. 597; O'Reilly, *Irish-English Dictionary*, p. 185.

⁴⁰³ eDIL, s.v. *fríthe*; Kelly, *Guide*, p. 123.

⁴⁰⁴ *Mac Coissi cecinit* (ed. Meyer, §1).

⁴⁰⁵ *Leabhar Cloinne Aodha Buidhe* (ed. Ó Donnchadha, l. 78).

⁴⁰⁶ *Togail na Tebe* (ed. Calder, ll. 1318–23).

since *TF* has been shown to have an affinity with classical adaptations.⁴⁰⁷ Moreover, *sníthe* would supplement the alliteration of *serb far snāthe* in this line.

Taking *sníthe* as a past participle (and substantive), this would mean: ‘your life-thread is a bitter spun thing’. Alternatively, taking *sníthe* as conditional passive sg, one might interpret *is* as the contraction of *ocus* and *serb* as a substantive; thus: ‘and the bitterness of your life-thread would be spun’. This latter interpretation in particular resembles the citation from *Leabhar Cloinne Aodha Buidhe*.

l. 497, *uar collaib*: Breatnach interprets *uar* in this context as the MidIr poss pron 2pl.⁴⁰⁸ Alternatively it might be the adjective *úar* ‘cold’, in which case it would be compounded with *collaib* (although lenition of the second element would be lacking); this is how Windisch interprets this phrase.⁴⁰⁹ However, this is problematic as the rhyme scheme of this stanza requires a final disyllable.

l. 499, *codnach*: as an adjective, this means ‘adult, compos mentis; sensible, reasonable’, but as a noun it also means ‘chief, leader’, which seems to be the adjectival meaning in *TF*; the same meaning is also found in *TBC-LU*, l. 2673: *is tusu in cor codnach*.

l. 503, *is ic*: for this line to have seven syllables, this must be read as ‘*s ic*’; cf. ‘*s is*’ in the previous stanza (4c).

l. 504: this line has eight syllables. Windisch suggests *leg. dul*, although *dula* is found alongside *dul* as nom sg in MidIr. An alternative would be to omit *-sa*, which is not necessary for the sense of the line. Since this is the only line in the poem which does not have seven syllables, I think it likely that this line also originally had seven, so I will follow Windisch’s emendation.

l. 509, *fuīdim*: eDIL suggests that *fuīdimm* is a by-form of *fáithimm* ‘the hem or border of a garment’.⁴¹⁰ In this context, it seems intended to conjure up an image of crows on a battle-field picking at corpses.

ll. 511–13, *Fomōrach : ro-ūallach*: technically this is consonance rather than rhyme. However, the poet is arguably using consonance intelligently (as has been argued for stanza 2), since the alternation between *ó* and *úa* in words such as the preposition mean that this is very close to rhyme.

l. 513, *i ndegaid*: as a prepositional phrase, *i ndegaid* means ‘after’, and can be used idiomatically with reference to a departed person, i.e. after the loss of; cf. e.g. *TBC-LU*, ll. 593–4: *is bethu immudu [mo bethu] ... i ndegaid mo chon*.

⁴⁰⁷ See ‘Textual Correspondences’, p. 86.

⁴⁰⁸ *SnG*, p. 275.

⁴⁰⁹ Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, l. 602.

⁴¹⁰ eDIL, s.v. *?fuīdimm*.

l. 515, *nocorb athair dóib aithech*: the sense of this seems to be to emphasise that all the Connacht warriors were nobly born. Windisch notes that this corresponds to the tale's opening which states that *nī baí nech díb acht mac rí 7 rīgna 7 curad 7 cathmīled do Chonnachtaib*.⁴¹¹

l. 516, *cleth*: although eDIL lists this citation under 'of uncertain meaning', it seems likely that here *cleth* has the figurative meaning 'warrior, chief' (gen pl).⁴¹²

l. 518, *co mbáni*: literally this means 'with whiteness'. In the poem *Ermahnung den Leib zu kasteien*, there is the phrase *do dá brathair co mbáine*.⁴¹³ eDIL suggests 'i.e. dead', and on this basis one might suggest that in the *TF* context this is also a metaphor for death, thus: 'you have fed the Badb with the dead'.⁴¹⁴ However, the whole line is: *Do máthair maith co míne, do dá brathair co mbáine*, and since *co míne* means 'with gentleness', *co mbáine* may in fact be describing the quality of purity rather than being a metaphor for death. It is perhaps more likely that this is the preposition *co* + abstract noun, forming an adjectival phrase, thus: 'the pallid Badb'; cf. *The Monastery of Tallaght: fer co rrath*,⁴¹⁵ *Stair Ercuil: ri ... co fill*;⁴¹⁶ and also 9c, *gillai Chonnacht co cáimi* 'beautiful youths of Connacht' (lit. 'with beauty').

l. 521, *ra tromalt*: Breatnach interprets this as perf passive sg of a compound verb *trom* 'heavy, grievous' + *ailid* 'fosters', in the MidIr formation of taking an adjective as the first element.⁴¹⁷ An alternative interpretation would be prep *ra* for *fri* with a compound of adj *trom* + noun *alt*: 'in grievous circumstances'.

Poem X. Ferb and Domnall's dialogue

Almost all lines resemble *deibide scaílte*, although 4ab, 6cd and 7ab differ in that the rhyme is between words with the same number of syllables. There are seven syllables per line and almost every line contains some alliteration.

l. 540, *fo-cicher*: this form is fut 3sg of *fo-ceird* 'puts, sends out', which can also be 'used to take the place of an intrans. vb. of motion', hence eDIL's suggestion for this citation: 'blood will burst through skin'.⁴¹⁸ Alternatively, this might be a variant form of the fut 1sg form *fo-cichur* (with MidIr unstressed vowels); this is how Windisch interprets it: 'ich werde Blut ... springen lassen'.⁴¹⁹

⁴¹¹ *TF*, ll. 13–14: 'there was none of them who was not the son of a king and a queen, and of a champion and a warrior of the Connachta'; Windisch, 'Tochmarc Ferbe', p. 541, n. to l. 620.

⁴¹² eDIL, s.v. *1 cleth*, (h), (e).

⁴¹³ *Ermahnung den Leib zu kasteien* (ed. Meyer, §19).

⁴¹⁴ eDIL, s.v. *báine*.

⁴¹⁵ *Monastery of Tallaght* (ed. Gwynn and Purton, §9).

⁴¹⁶ *Stair Ercuil* (ed. Quin, ll. 433–4).

⁴¹⁷ *SnG*, p. 287.

⁴¹⁸ eDIL, s.v. *fo-ceird*, II.

⁴¹⁹ Windisch, 'Tochmarc Ferbe', p. 511.

l. 541, *con-selub*: eDIL suggests that this is fut 1sg of *con-sela* ‘smites, hews, cuts’, although it gives the form *coselub*, taken from Windisch.⁴²⁰ The MS reading is *ɔselub*, and although *ɔ* can be expanded to *co* before a consonant, here I would suggest that *con-selub* would actually make more sense as a form of *con-sela*.

l. 546, *mac samla*: although this can be found as a single word *macsamla* ‘an equal, match’, lit. ‘son of likeness’, eDIL comments that it is ‘not a true compd. as shown by the unlenited *s*; in poetry *samla* counts as a distinct word’.⁴²¹ In support of this, it cites this example from *TF*, where the internal rhyme *tharga : samla* confirms that here *mac samla* should be treated as two words.

l. 550, *nos li[ú]nfea*: the MS reading is *nos linfea*, which would be fut 3sg of *línaid* ‘fills’, but ‘will fill’ does not make sense in this context. *Línaid* does have extended applications applied to emotions etc., but these seem to be mostly related to ‘fills’; cf. e.g. *TBC-LL*, l. 4663: *línfaid cuma cridi rígan*. There is one example which offers a meaning that might work here, from *The Irish Life of Bevis of Hampton*: *rolín gorta sinn*, which Robinson translates as ‘hunger has overcome us’, although even here this is a more abstract subject than we have in *TF*.⁴²² Alternatively, Windisch suggests that this is intended for *nos liunfa*, from *lénaid*, *liúnaid* ‘wounds’.⁴²³ This makes good sense and is easily explicable in terms of minim confusion.

l. 554, *for scéol*: Windisch interprets this as a compound *forscéol*, although he has not found it attested anywhere else.⁴²⁴ However, I interpret it as the preposition *for* (with the meaning ‘in, forming a part of’) + noun *scél*: ‘in the tale’.⁴²⁵ Another alternative is that this is a variant spelling of *airscél* ‘famous tale’ (with MidIr *ar* for *for*), in a fossilised independent dative, although these are rare in a late text such as this.

l. 554, *mórgnīmaig*: although eDIL translates *gnímach* as ‘active, busy’, I would suggest that in this context it means ‘great-deeded’ (since *gnímach* is derived from *gním* ‘deed’).

l. 561, *díthnacht*: the meaning of *díthnacht* is uncertain, and only this citation is given in eDIL. Windisch suggests that it is ‘eine Weiterbildung’ from *díth* ‘destruction’, and explains the presence of the *n* through the parallel with *crith* ‘trembling’ and *crithnaigid* ‘trembles’.⁴²⁶ Alternatively, this might be *leg. díthracht* (since *n* for *r* is an easy error). *Díthracht* is an adjective meaning ‘weak’, but might be acting as a substantive here.

⁴²⁰ eDIL, s.v. *1 con-sela*; Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, l. 649.

⁴²¹ eDIL, s.v. *mac(c)samla*.

⁴²² *Irish Life of Bevis of Hampton* (ed. and transl. Robinson, p. 293).

⁴²³ Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, p. 510, n. 1; p. 542, n. to l. 658.

⁴²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 542, n. to l. 662.

⁴²⁵ eDIL, s.v. *1 for*, (f).

⁴²⁶ Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, p. 542, n. to l. 669.

Poem XI. Ferb's second lament for Maine

Almost all lines resemble *deibide scaílte*, although 1ab, 6ab and 9cd differ in that the rhyme is between words with the same number of syllables. With a few exceptions (e.g. 3b, 5b, 8a), there are mostly seven syllables per line. There is infrequent use of alliteration.

l. 581: this line has eight syllables. Diplom. gives the note *sic* after *orut*, but this is simply the MidIr conjugated prep *ar* + pron 2sg showing influence of *for*, so it does not seem to be an error; therefore, it is unclear what *sic* was intended to signal.

ll. 582, 590, 605: see 'Linguistic Analysis', p. 12, for discussion of hiatus in these lines.

l. 586, *ro letair*: Windisch suggests *leg. rot letair*.⁴²⁷ The infix is certainly implied and it seems likely that it should be restored through analogy with the following line.

l. 589: this line has eight syllables.

l. 592, *ā chánaib*: *ā* here must be interpreted as a MidIr form of the preposition *ó*, since the following lenition indicates that this cannot be the preposition *a*, or *a* for *i*.⁴²⁸

l. 600: this line has six syllables. Windisch suggests *leg. in scél sin*; however, there are several lines of irregular length in this poem, so I will not emend.⁴²⁹

l. 601, *Finnabair na nglangāll*: this title for Finnabair does not seem to be attested anywhere else. This title might perhaps be placed in the context of *rechtaid géill*, who is listed in the eighth-century legal text *Bretha Crólige* among high-status women for whom sick-maintenance is replaced by a fixed fee.⁴³⁰

l. 606, *a gné*: nasalisation after the poss pron 3pl is lacking here and should be restored.

⁴²⁷ Windisch, 'Tochmarc Ferbe', p. 512, n. 3.

⁴²⁸ See *SnG*, p. 329 and 'Linguistic Analysis', p. 25.

⁴²⁹ Windisch, 'Tochmarc Ferbe', p. 514, n. 2.

⁴³⁰ *Bretha Crólige* (ed. and transl. Binchy, §32): 'a ruler entitled to hostages'. Glosses to this passage give Medb as an example of such a woman.

Textual Notes to the *Rosc*

In Breatnach's words, 'Irish texts appear in three forms: prose, rhyming syllabic verse, and *rosc*. The simplest definition of *rosc* is that it is neither of the other two'.⁴³¹ It is problematic to define *rosc* more precisely than this, given its often deliberately obscure speech, with terse, allusive modes of expression, unusual word order and rare vocabulary. Unlike with rhyming syllabic verse, there are no metrical tracts to explain the different structures of *roscada*. As a general rule, *rosc* is characterised by the presence of alliteration (both within and between lines) and the absence of rhyme. However, Breatnach has shown that, beyond this, *roscada* are found in a wide variety of forms. Some of these types are differentiated according to the number of stressed words per line,⁴³² and others according to the number of syllables in the word at the line-end.⁴³³ Yet others have no apparent regular syllabic or stress pattern but are heavily alliterative.⁴³⁴ The rules for alliteration in *rosc* also diverge from the stricter rules applied to rhyming syllabic verse, since stressed words may alliterate with unstressed words, or with non-contiguous words, and so on.⁴³⁵

Two poems in *TF* may be defined as *rosc*, both druidic prophecies delivered in §5. Both poems can be divided into lines of two or three stressed words (occasionally also four). In Poem III, many of these lines contain internal alliteration. A particularly interesting pattern may be found in l. 154, where *óc dālfid* is echoed by *édubi* through a combination of alliteration of non-contiguous words and consonance. In contrast, there is little alliteration in Poem IV. However, both poems share a structure based on runs of grammatically similar phrases, such as verbs of the same tense (for example, ll. 162–4: *ar fo-crēhtnaigfiter slūaig, / air-dībdibther lāechrad, / do-brisfiter tige*) or phrases starting with prepositions (for example, ll. 150–2: *i ndūnad Geirg / ō thrāth nóna nīthaige / co medón laí*). This is reminiscent of other *roscada*, such as the verse in *Esnada Tige Buchet*.⁴³⁶ These runs also correspond to the line divisions, and I have used indentation to attempt to indicate their grouping.

The presence of *roscada* in medieval Irish texts has prompted a number of debates among scholars. In particular, it was often assumed in the past that this verse represented a survival from the pre-Christian period, passed down through oral tradition.⁴³⁷ However, this was challenged, first by Carney, and later by Breatnach, based on his analysis of the *roscada* from *Bretha Nemed*.⁴³⁸ Thus as Breatnach says, 'the *rosc* style cannot be used as a sole dating criterion', and so the presence of these two poems in a text of such a late date as *TF* should not necessarily lead us to conclude immediately

⁴³¹ Breatnach, 'Canon Law', p. 452.

⁴³² See Murphy, *Early Irish Metrics*, p. 41, for the definition of 'stressed words' in OIr.

⁴³³ Breatnach, 'Zur Frage der *Roscada*', pp. 199–202.

⁴³⁴ Breatnach, 'Canon Law', pp. 452–3.

⁴³⁵ See Murphy, *Early Irish Metrics*, pp. 36–7, for the rules governing alliteration in rhyming syllabic verse, although it should be noted that even in this type of verse a freer form of alliteration could sometimes be found (see Carney, 'Linking Alliteration').

⁴³⁶ *Esnada Tige Buchet* (ed. Greene, ll. 499–502).

⁴³⁷ For example, Binchy, 'Varia Hibernica', p. 31; Charles-Edwards, '*Corpus Iuris Hibernici*', pp. 146–7.

⁴³⁸ Carney, *Studies in Irish Literature*, p. 298; Breatnach, 'Canon Law'.

that the *roscada* must vastly predate the surrounding prose or the rhyming syllabic poems.⁴³⁹ There is also the issue of terminology, since such verse has been variously termed *retoiric* or *rosc* / *roscad* by scholars. Thurneysen argued that *retoiric*, marked .*r.* in margins, was the original term, while it was thought that the term *rosc* was restricted in the early period to poetically adorned legal maxims.⁴⁴⁰ However, Mac Cana disagreed and argued that .*r.* originated as an abbreviation for *rosc* despite the lack of early attestations.⁴⁴¹ All that can definitively be said is that, by some point in the development of medieval Irish literature, two terms were in circulation to refer to this type of verse: *retoiric* and *rosc* / *roscad*. It might be noted that both of the *TF* poems have .*r.* beside them in the margin in the MS,⁴⁴² and that Poem III is introduced as *retoiric*: l. 142, *do-ringni in rethoric-seo*.

In terms of the function of this verse, *roscada* occur in a wide variety of contexts, but one predominant use is in prophetic or magical utterances, perhaps, as Carey suggests, from ‘the belief that a cryptic form of words may paradoxically act to reveal hidden knowledge’.⁴⁴³ Poems III and IV in *TF* belong to this category, alongside prophecies found in such texts as *TBC* and *Cath Maige Tuired*.⁴⁴⁴ It is clear, then, that the use of the *rosc* metre for these two poems was a stylistic choice, based on their content and the mood that the author wished to evoke. It might be noted that the other poetic prophecy in the text, Poem I, has been written in an unusual metre, albeit belonging to the rhyming syllabic type, which is likely to have been a similar stylistic choice.

Poem III. Imrind’s prophecy

l. 144, *erch[ó]d*: the MS reading is *erchad*. eDIL only gives this citation under *erchad* and does not suggest a translation. This might be a form of *ercad*, verbal noun of *ercaid* ‘wounds’, thus: ‘blue-grey wounding’, although the lenition mark over the *c* would then be an error. Alternatively, *erchad* might be an error for a different word. There are several options of words starting *er-/air-*. *Erchind* is a variant of *airchinn* ‘narrow side of rectangle, head, end’, thus: ‘blue-grey end’. This would be a physical description of the cloud, cf. the prose: l. 138, *glass in cend aile* (although note that the spelling *airchind* is found later in *TF* (l. 180)). *Erchót* is a variant of *airchót* (which also includes the variants *airchoid*, *urchod*) ‘act of harming, injuring, harm, injury, damage’, thus: ‘blue-grey destruction’. Note that eDIL gives examples where this is found alongside *neim*: cf. *Mo Lling: biaid a irchóit 7 a neim it belaiibseo*

⁴³⁹ Breatnach, ‘Canon Law’, p. 459.

⁴⁴⁰ Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden- und Königsage*, pp. 53–6.

⁴⁴¹ Mac Cana, ‘On the Use of the Term *Retoiric*’.

⁴⁴² See Mac Cana, ‘On the Use of the Term *Retoiric*’, p. 74, on LL’s use of the abbreviation .*r.*. He argues that in LL poetic abbreviations have been used more systematically, since ‘normal rhymed syllabic verse in a prose context is generally marked by ϕ whereas passages of abnormal structure are labelled .*r.*’.

⁴⁴³ Carey, ‘Obscure Styles’, p. 24.

⁴⁴⁴ *TBC-LU*, ll. 957–62, 3518–22, 3531–43, 4079–82; *Cath Maige Tuired* (ed. Gray, §§83, 166, 167).

(a curse);⁴⁴⁵ *Do airem muinntire Crist: met a nemi 7 a erchoti*.⁴⁴⁶ *Airchót* also occurs in *Tochmarc Becfhola: Nos léicidh uaib ... a n-urchód*,⁴⁴⁷ where Carey translates it as ‘demon, spectre’.⁴⁴⁸

The first three lines of the poem clearly describe the three colours of the cloud and what they portend. Since the words associated with the other two colours are more abstract, it seems unlikely that this line would be a physical description of the cloud: ‘blue-grey end’. Therefore, I conclude that this is more likely to be an error for *ercad* ‘wounding’ or *erchód* ‘destruction’; either would be an easy error, but given that *erchod* is the better attested and is found elsewhere associated with *neim*, I prefer this reading.

l. 145, *crūa credbaighthi*: *crūa* seems to be a variant of *crú/cró*, which has three meanings that seem relevant to the context: 1 *cró* ‘troop’; 2 *cró* ‘blood; wound’; 3 *cró* ‘violent death’. The choice of which word is meant relies on the meaning of the verb, which is uncertain (see below) – although ‘violent death’ does not seem to fit in any case.

Credbaighthi is the past participle of *credbaigid* ‘shrinks, consumes, gnaws’. If the noun is 1 *cró* ‘troop’ (nom sg or pl), this might mean ‘troop(s) consumed’. However, eDIL gives a further example alongside 2 *cró* ‘blood’: *ceithre cumala ’na chru creabhdhaiche* (O’Curry’s law transcripts in RIA) for which ‘coagulated’ is suggested, and this would work in this context as well.⁴⁴⁹ Alternatively, if we interpret this as 2 *cró* ‘wound’, this might mean ‘festering wounds’, as an extension of the meaning ‘consumes, gnaws’.

The line-division of the first lines of the poem is a contentious issue. According to the MS punctuation, the layout should be as follows (I give commas where the MS gives a *punctus*):

<i>Dubnél nemi,</i>	Black cloud of poison,
<i>glass erch[ó]d,</i>	blue-grey destruction,
<i>imfæbor derg,</i>	red double-edged blade,
<i>crūa credbaighthi</i>	[there will be] coagulated blood

However, Dillon offers an alternative interpretation, arguing that the punctuation in the MS is misleading.⁴⁵⁰ His suggestion is: *Dub nél nime, / Glass ercad imfæbur, / Derg crua credbaighthi*. He translates this as: ‘The black is a cloud from heaven, the grey is the piercing of two-edged swords, the red is for festering wounds’. Setting aside his error of *nime* ‘of heaven’ for *nemi* ‘of poison’, this interpretation seems preferable, since it incorporates *crūa credbaigthe* more neatly into the poem’s structure.

⁴⁴⁵ *Mo Lling* (Diplom., l. 36760).

⁴⁴⁶ *Do airem muinntire Crist* (in *Leabhar Breac* (Dublin, RIA 23.P.16), 146b–147b; at 147a29).

⁴⁴⁷ *Tochmarc Becfhola* (ed. Bhreatnach, §11).

⁴⁴⁸ Carey, ‘Tara and the Supernatural’ p. 48, n. 89.

⁴⁴⁹ eDIL, s.v. *credba(ig)id*.

⁴⁵⁰ Dillon, ‘On Three Passages’, p. 283.

l. 153, *lechtlige di lār*: *lechtlige* as a compound means ‘corpses, the slain (in battle)’. Note that this word also occurs in *TTr*; cf. *TTr*, ll. 1720–1: *co torchratar arna n-athchumma lechtligi láech landlúith i cosraigib cró*; *TTr*², l. 1113: *lechtlaige 7 carnail mór do chollaib dóine*; *TTr* (Book of Ballymote): *lechtlige saercland sanchan iarna ndichned and*.⁴⁵¹

The prepositional phrase *di lār* means ‘from within’ or ‘from the middle’, so perhaps in this context it means ‘from our midst’, i.e. all the men in Conchobar’s army will be slain in the coming battles, as indeed is confirmed in l. 332, where only Conchobar and Brod escape from Dúnad Geirg.

In terms of the meaning of the prophecy, it is clear that the opening lines correspond to the colours given in the prose description of the cloud (l. 138, *cirdub ind ara cend dō 7 dergg a medón 7 glass in cend aile*) and are intended to elucidate what those three colours signify. In the phrase *ō thrāth nóna nīthaige co medón laí, nóin* refers to the canonical hour of *nones*, i.e. 3pm, so this suggests that the battle will take place throughout the night. This is confirmed later on, where we are told that Maine and Cobthach *ro gabsat co sētrech 7 co ferda in tech co mmatain*.⁴⁵² The reference to *óc dālfid écdubi* may be a reference to Maine – it should be remembered that this prophecy is being given from the Ulster perspective by Conchobar’s druid, so one would expect it to highlight the threats to the Ulster army (this also supports the interpretation of *lechtlige di lār* given above).

Poem IV. Ollgáeth’s second prophecy

As noted earlier, this druidic prophecy is one of the few points in common between the LL-prose, LL-poem and Eg-prose.⁴⁵³ While the prophecy is shorter in the LL-poem (stanza 22), in the Eg-prose it is given as a complete poem which corresponds strikingly with that attested in the LL-prose, although the text seems more corrupt in Eg.⁴⁵⁴ From this, we can conclude that the LL-prose and the Eg-prose ultimately shared a source which contained a version of Poem IV. If we believe that the ‘short version’ reflects the earlier attestation of the tale, then this could provide evidence that Poem IV may predate the rest of the LL-prose, which otherwise seems to be of a late MidIr date. This is supported by the linguistic evidence of the poem, which contains no more than superficial MidIr features (e.g. l. 160 *airigid*, confusion between lenited *d* and *g*; l. 161 *hallmuri*, falling-together of unstressed vowels (OIr acc sg *-e*)).

l. 160, *brod in airi[dig]*: this phrase is common to the LL-prose, LL-poem and Eg-prose.⁴⁵⁵ In Eg, it is given as: *Is broth ind airdig sin*, while the LL-poem has: *brod ane in airidig*. While this is clearly a prophecy relating to Gerg’s death, it should be noted that the circumstances around this differ

⁴⁵¹ *TTr* (in the Book of Ballymote (Dublin, RIA 23.P.12), 230r–247r; at 246ra12–13).

⁴⁵² *TF*, l. 265: ‘held the house vigorously and manfully until morning’.

⁴⁵³ See ‘Textual Tradition’, p. 6.

⁴⁵⁴ *TF* (ed. Windisch, pp. 524 and 550–1).

⁴⁵⁵ See Windisch’s discussion, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, pp. 457–9.

between the long and short versions. In the short version (Eg-prose and LL-poem), during the feasting at Dúnad Geirg, the druid suddenly utters this prophecy, following which Conchobar enters the hall and Brod casts a spear through Gerg, who is holding a cup at the time. If we take this as resembling the original events of the tale, then it seems that *brod* in the prophecy is a punning reference to the servant Brod who will kill Gerg, while *airidig* is a form of *airdech* ‘cup, vessel’, presumably referring to the cup Gerg will be holding. Meanwhile, the LL-prose seems to have attempted to rationalise this sequence of events further. In this version, the druid’s prophecy is said to have been prompted by the dropping of a vessel (*escra*) into the vat *Ól nGúala* (in the short version there is no indication as to what prompted the prophecy). Then when Gerg is killed, Brod’s spear is said to pass through Gerg’s servant, conveniently named Airidech, as well. Windisch argues that this Airidech is a later invention, created as an equivalent person to be anticipated by *airidig* in the prophecy, just as *brod* anticipates Brod.⁴⁵⁶ The anticipatory meaning of *brod in airidig* is therefore clear in both versions; however, the literal meaning of the phrase is more problematic.

brod: the word *brod* itself means ‘straw, splinter, speck, spot; particle (of dust, dirt, etc.)’. eDIL suggests a translation ‘the stalk (?)’ for the *TF* phrase, but this does not make sense in this context.⁴⁵⁷ Windisch is unsure about the translation: he only knows 2 *broth* ‘meat’, but also suggests *broth* ‘boiling’.⁴⁵⁸ There is also a word *brot* ‘goad, spike’, which includes the form *brod*. This might work as a reference to Brod putting a spear through the cup/Airidig, although it does not work in the context of the cup dropping into the vat.

airidig: note that the MS reading is *airigid*, which is the verbal noun of *ar-saig*, meaning ‘choice portion’. However, although this word would fit the context of dropping the vessel into the wine, it is clear from the correspondence with the short version, and due to its anticipation of the name Airidech, that this should be *leg. airidig*.

The meaning of this phrase may well always remain obscure and was likely to have been deliberately so (given the nature of *rosc*). Its meaning in any case was probably always secondary to the pun referring to Brod’s attack on Gerg later in the tale. For this reason, I have left it untranslated in my edition, although a future study of the relationship between the three versions might shed more light on this issue.

l. 161, *nī ba cían la hallmuri bías*: ‘until’ must be understood between *cían* and *la* here, as otherwise this would read ‘it will not be long that it will be among foreigners’, which is not the case, since the *Ól nGúala* remains with the Ulaid forever!

⁴⁵⁶ Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, p. 458.

⁴⁵⁷ eDIL, s.v. *1 brod*.

⁴⁵⁸ Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, p. 459, n. 1.

l. 162, *fo-crēchtnaigfiter*: although this is the only citation given for this verb, eDIL suggests that it is a form of a verb *fo-crēchtnaig* ‘wounds’.⁴⁵⁹ It seems to be a hapax formed from *fo-* compounded with the verb *crēchtaigid* ‘wounds’.

l. 164, *do-brisfiter*: eDIL gives this form as a headword, with only this citation from *TF*, translated as ‘will be broken up’.⁴⁶⁰ Presumably this is a verb related to *brissid* ‘breaks’.

l. 165, *dūt[in]*: the MS reading is *ditui*. eDIL only gives this citation under *ditui* and no suggested translation.⁴⁶¹ Windisch suggests the interpretation *dí-tui* ‘non-silence’, negative prefix *dí-* + *tóe* ‘silence’, acc sg *túi*.⁴⁶² Alternatively, this might be an error for *dítin*, acc sg of *dítiu* ‘covering, cover, shelter; protecting, defence’ (verbal noun of *do-eim*), which would be easy minim confusion (although the MS definitely gives *-ui*).

l. 170, *fó*: this means ‘good’, which does not make sense in this context, so I suggest that ‘lucky’ might be an appropriate extension of the meaning.

⁴⁵⁹ eDIL, s.v. *?fo-crēchtnaig*.

⁴⁶⁰ eDIL, s.v. *dobrisfiter*.

⁴⁶¹ eDIL, s.v. *?ditui*.

⁴⁶² Windisch, ‘*Tochmarc Ferbe*’, p. 535, n. to l. 207.

The vessel *Ól nGúala* is mentioned twice in *TF*. In §5, it is introduced as being in Gerg's possession: *Is and sin dano ro sudiged dabach umai thall is' taig, diarba chomainm Ól Gūalai iar sin.*⁴⁶³ It is the dropping of the cup into this vat which prompts the druid's prophecy regarding its capture. §16 suggests that *Ól nGúala* was the name given to the vat by the Ulaid (*at-berthea Ól nGūala la Ultu*), which is supported by the use of *comainm* 'additional name, cognomen' and the phrase *iar sin* in §5, implying that it did not have this name at Dúnad Geirg.⁴⁶⁴ Thus the second appearance of the *Ól nGúala* in *TF* is in §16, when it is carried off by Conchobar's army among the other spoils taken from Dúnad Geirg. Here we receive some additional information about it: *no fiurad forba Ulad uili a llán do lind, & is ria at-berthea Ól nGūala la Ultu, fo bíth is teni gūail no bíd i nEmain is' tig i n-ibthea hí. 7 is ūad ro ainmniged Loch Gūala Umai i nDaminis crīche Ulad, ar is foí atá indiu i ndīamraib.*⁴⁶⁵

The Name 'Ól nGúala'

To consider first the meaning of the name *Ól nGúala*: *ól* is the verbal noun of *ibid* 'drinks', and can also mean 'measure of liquor; vat, vessel'. Meanwhile, two explanations are offered for the meaning of *gúala*, either as gen sg of *góla* 'pit, prison' (making *Ól nGúala* 'Measure of an Abyss'), or as gen sg of *gúal* 'charcoal, coal' (thus 'Drink of Coal').

This vessel appears in two medieval Irish tales where it is attributed with properties which align with the former interpretation. The first is *TF* itself, which states: *no fiurad forba Ulad uili a llán do lind, & is ria at-berthea Ól nGūala la Ultu.*⁴⁶⁶ Meanwhile, a very similar vessel is described in *Tochmarc Emire*: *Dia mbátar Ulaid fecht n-ann i nEmain Macha la Conchobur oc ól inn Iarngúalai: cét mbrothe no téiged ind di linn im tráth nóna. Ba sí sin ól ngúalai. Is sí no fiurad Ulltu uili i n-óensíst.*⁴⁶⁷ In *Tochmarc Emire*, *ól ngúalai* is not the name of the vessel (which is *Íarngúala*, with *íarn* 'iron' as the first element), but rather a description of its immense capacity (thus 'measure of an abyss' must be the translation here). It is nevertheless highly likely that the same vessel is being referred to in

⁴⁶³ *TF*, ll. 155–6: 'now at that time a vat of brass was set there in the house, the additional name of which was *Ól nGúala* in later times'.

⁴⁶⁴ *TF*, l. 624: 'it used to be called *Ól nGúala* by the Ulaid'.

⁴⁶⁵ *TF*, ll. 623–6: 'its fullness of ale would suffice the whole territory of Ulster, and on account of it, it used to be called *Ól nGúala* by the Ulaid, because a fire of coal used to be in Emain in the house in which it was drunk. And Loch Gúala Umai, in Daim-Inis in the territory of Ulster, has been named from it, for it [the vat] is concealed under it [the lake] today'.

⁴⁶⁶ *TF*, ll. 623–4: 'its fullness of ale would suffice the whole territory of Ulster, and on account of it, it used to be called *Ól nGúala* by the Ulaid'.

⁴⁶⁷ *Tochmarc Emire* (ed. van Hamel, §4; my transl.): 'On one occasion, the Ulaid were in Emain Macha with Conchobar, drinking from the *Íarngúala*. A hundred measures of drink used to go into it every evening. That was the "measure of an abyss". It used to satisfy all the Ulstermen in a single sitting'.

both tales, due to the similarity in the description. It may even be that the *TF*-author was borrowing from *Tochmarc Emire* here.⁴⁶⁸

In *TF*, the author then goes on to offer an alternative explanation for this vessel's name: *fo bíth is teni gūail no bíd i nEmain is' tig i n-ibthea hí*.⁴⁶⁹ This explanation seems to suggest the latter interpretation of *gúala* as gen sg of *gúal* 'coal'. This interpretation also occurs in *Lebor Gabála*, which narrates how Partholón had *lestar do lind somilis / as na fetad nech ní d'ól / acht tré chuislind do derg-ór*, from which two troublemakers drink: *mus luisset ól ngúala nglé, / triasin cuislind n-óraigi*.⁴⁷⁰ Here *ól ngúala* is not the name of the vessel but describes the drink which the men took. While *ól* could be interpreted as 'drink' or 'measure' here, it seems likely that *gúal* 'coal' was what the author understood by *gúala* in this context, since it is found alongside another adjective *glé* 'bright', conjuring up the impression of glowing coals, which may have been intended as an image related to the method of drinking *tré chuislind do derg-ór*. Meanwhile, there is no indication that this vat was of unusual size, making 'bright measure of an abyss' a less likely translation in this context.

The phrase *ól ngúala* therefore seems to have been analysed in (at least) two different ways in the literary tradition, both of which are presented by the *TF*-author. Such an approach is characteristic of the etymologising approach found in medieval Irish glossaries such as *Sanas Cormaic*, derived from Isidore's *Etymologiae*, and beyond this from scriptural exegesis. As Baumgarten observes, 'uniqueness of the etymology is not a postulate'.⁴⁷¹ In other words, 'there is no such thing as a unique etymology; multiple etymologies are not only possible but seem even to be encouraged', viewed as a way of getting closer to the *vis nominis* 'force of the word' through a variety of approaches and interpretations.⁴⁷² This approach is not only found in glossaries, but also in law-texts, 'learned' texts such as *Auraicept na nÉces*, *Dindshenchas Érenn* and *Cóir Anmann*, and literary texts such as *TF*, and seems to have been a fundamental aspect of the learned classes' interaction with their material.⁴⁷³

The Location of Loch Gúala Umai

In addition to offering explanations for the name *Ól nGúala*, §16 of *TF* also includes *dindshenchas* which explains that the hiding-place of the vessel gave rise to a place-name: *is ūad ro ainmniged Loch Gūala Umai i nDaminis crīche Ulad, ar is foí atá indiu i ndīamraib*.⁴⁷⁴ It is not clear if this is an explanation invented to explain the pre-existing name *Loch Gúala Umai* or if it was the place-

⁴⁶⁸ Note the character of Cathach who also seems to have been influenced by the female warriors in *Tochmarc Emire*; see 'Role of Women', p. 175.

⁴⁶⁹ *TF*, ll. 624–5: 'because a fire of coal used to be in Emain in the house in which it was drunk'.

⁴⁷⁰ *Lebor Gabála* (ed. and transl. Macalister, III, Poem 32, §§11 and 13): 'a vat of most sweet ale: / out of which none could drink aught / save through a tube of red gold'; 'soon they drank a bright coal-drink, / through the gilded tube'.

⁴⁷¹ Baumgarten, 'A Hiberno-Isidorean Etymology', p. 226.

⁴⁷² Russell, 'Read it in a Glossary', p. 10; see also Russell, 'Sounds of a Silence', p. 25.

⁴⁷³ On the specific link between *TF* and *CA*, see p. 162.

⁴⁷⁴ *TF*, ll. 625–6: 'Loch Gúala Umai, in Daim-Inis in the territory of Ulster, has been named from it, for it [the vat] is concealed under it [the lake] today'.

name that was invented to fit this context. Either way, it seems likely that here *gúala* is being understood as ‘abyss’, probably as a metaphor for ‘vessel’, so that this literally means ‘Lake of the Brass Abyss, i.e. Vessel’.

Daim-Inis (‘Ox-Island’) is an island now called Devenish Island (see Fig. 3), located at the southern tip of Lough Erne in Co. Fermanagh (Ulster).⁴⁷⁵ Since this is a small island, seemingly not containing a lake, it seems likely that the text must be understood as stating that Daim-Inis marks the place in the lake where the vessel has been concealed.

Fig. 3: Location of Daim-Inis



images taken from Google Maps

Textual Correspondences

The vessel *Ól nGúala* appears to have been a recurring object within Ulster Cycle tradition and is mentioned in a number of texts.⁴⁷⁶ I have already commented on the possible link between *Tochmarc Emire* and *TF*, both of which mention its unusually large capacity which could supply drink for all the Ulaid. Moreover, there are two other texts which refer specifically to the association of the *Ól nGúala* with Gerg, and its capture by Conchobar after Gerg’s death. One is *Scéla Conchobair mac Nessa*, an ‘Early Middle-Irish’ tale also found in *LL*.⁴⁷⁷ The relevant passage is: *Tricha láth ngaile i n-imdai Chonchobuir fri ól. Ól nguala .i. dabach Geirg, for lár in tige bithlán. Is í thucad a Glind Gergg dia r’ort Gerg la Conchobar*.⁴⁷⁸ This shows knowledge of the events of *TF* insofar as Gerg is concerned. The adjective *bithlán* ‘ever-full’ suggests that here we are also to understand the name as ‘Measure of

⁴⁷⁵ Sims-Williams, ‘Iron House’, p. 8.

⁴⁷⁶ The relationship between these various texts is explored by Thurneysen, ‘Zur irischen Grammatik’, pp. 65–70.

⁴⁷⁷ Stokes, ‘Tidings of Conchobar’, p. 18.

⁴⁷⁸ *Scéla Conchobair* (ed. and transl. Stokes, §22): ‘Thirty champions in Conchobar’s room carousing. *Ól nguala* – that is, Gerg’s vat, ever-full on the floor of the house. ’Tis it that was brought out of Glenn Geirg when Gerg was slain by Conchobar’.

an Abyss'. It should further be noted that, as already mentioned, the carrying-off of the *Ól nGúala* is an element also attested in the Eg-prose version (although not in the LL-poem), suggesting that this may have been present in an earlier version of the tale, a source shared by the LL-prose and Eg-prose.⁴⁷⁹ Since *Scéla Conchobair* is of an earlier date than the LL-prose (according to Stokes' dating), it may be that the reference to the *Ól nGúala* in this tale derives from this earlier version of *Tochmarc Ferbe*.⁴⁸⁰

Ól nGúala is also the only object to have an entry in *Cóir Anmann*, a compilation of etymological explanations mainly of personal names:

*Ól nGúalai .i. dabhach umhai issidi. Iss í tuc Conchubur mac Nessa a dún Geirg Fáeburdil íar n-argain in dúine 7 iar marbad Geirg. Ól nGúalai do rádh fría fo bíth is tene ghúail no bhíth a nEmain Mhacha astigh a n-ibhtheá í. Is uadh sin ro hainmniged Loch nGúalai a nDaiminis crichi Ulad ar is faí atá aniú i ndíamhraibh. Gearg mac Fáeburdil meic Cathaír meic Glais meic In Derccaigh meic Srúibh meic Rossa meic Rudhraige.*⁴⁸¹

This entry is found in CA3, the longest and latest version of *Cóir Anmann* (possibly first half of the thirteenth century).⁴⁸² *Fo bíth ... i ndíamhraibh* is shared verbatim between *Cóir Anmann* and *TF*. Arbuthnot comments on the general tendency of all redactions of *Cóir Anmann* to derive their material from other sources; in relation to this entry in particular, she states: 'The material of this entry was clearly borrowed from the version of *Tochmarc Ferbe* contained in LL'.⁴⁸³ Despite this apparent borrowing, the entry only gives the 'coal' explanation for the name *Ól nGúala*, not the 'abyss' explanation relating to the vat's capacity.

Considering all these texts together, one may suggest a possible textual history for this vessel, potentially starting with a vessel named *Íarngúala* in the possession of the Ulaid attested in *Tochmarc Emire*, but gaining the nickname *Ól nGúala* (originally describing its properties) in a version of *TF* which narrated how the Ulaid acquired it from Gerg. From this putative earlier version of *TF* are derived the references to the vessel in the Eg-prose, LL-prose and *Scéla Conchobair*, while *Cóir Anmann* seems to have borrowed from the LL-prose. It can be seen, therefore, that *TF* is not only embedded in the intertextual network of texts making up the Ulster Cycle through its shared cast of characters and its specific status as a *remscél* to *TBC*, but also through the presence of this vessel *Ól nGúala*.

⁴⁷⁹ See 'Textual Tradition', p. 7.

⁴⁸⁰ Thurneysen cites in support of this view the lack of reference to the fire of coals in either *Scéla Conchobair* or the Eg-prose ('Zur irischen Grammatik', p. 68).

⁴⁸¹ CA (ed. and transl. Arbuthnot, II, §164): 'Ól nGuala [< ?ól 'vat'/ól 'draught' + gual 'coal'], i.e. it was a copper vat. Conchobar son of Nes brought it out of the fort of Gerg [son of?] Fáeburdil after raiding the fort and killing Gerg. It was called Ól nGuala because there used to be a coal fire inside Emain Macha where people drank [from?] it. Loch nGuala in Daiminis in the land of the Ulaid was named after that, for it is hidden under the loch today. Gerg son of Fáeburdil, son of Cathaír, son of Glas, son of In Dercach, son of Srúb, son of Ros, son of Rudraige'.

⁴⁸² Arbuthnot, *Cóir Anmann* I, 72.

⁴⁸³ *Ibid.* I, 39; II, 183; see also Arbuthnot, 'Medieval Irish Compilation', p. 5; Windisch, '*Tochmarc Ferbe*', p. 452.

Introduction

It can be seen from the textual notes that the LL-prose version of *TF* is a complex text containing a wide range of interesting literary features. I have touched on many of these briefly in the notes, such as the author's use of language and metaphor, the intertextuality and verbatim correspondences between *TF* and other medieval Irish texts, and the evocation of dramatic irony and a sense of foreboding. However, perhaps the most noteworthy literary feature of *TF* is its portrayal of female characters and what this can tell us about contemporary attitudes towards women.¹ *TF* is striking not only for the sheer number of its female characters but also for the variety of roles which they perform, some of which are those conventionally defined by scholars as 'female roles' but some of which push the boundaries of these traditional roles and challenge us to reconsider our understanding of the medieval Irish attitude towards women. For this reason, the final chapter of this thesis is a literary commentary focusing on this particular aspect of the text.

Much scholarly work concerning women in medieval Ireland has focused on attempting to identify what 'real life' was like for women at the time.² However, my concern here is rather to consider, in Oxenham's words, 'what the authors of the sources wished their audiences to believe of women, and the ways in which they constructed their works in order to reflect this'.³ To some extent, this is all that can ever be ascertained, since our knowledge of women in this period is almost exclusively derived from surviving written sources, whose portrayal of women will have been refracted through many different lenses, and influenced by political or social agendas and the requirements of genre.⁴ Therefore, my aim here is to analyse the attitude towards women evinced by this particular text, and what its portrayal of female characters may be able to tell us about medieval Irish attitudes more broadly, in the context of other depictions of female characters in medieval Irish literature.

There is also a large body of scholarship which has sought to analyse women in terms of surviving remnants of mythology; however, this study will seek to consider these female characters as *literary* figures. As Findon observes, there has been a disproportionate focus in scholarship on

¹ In this chapter, for '*Tochmarc Ferbe*', read 'the LL-prose version'.

² For example, the essays collected in *Studies in Early Irish Law*, ed. Thurneysen *et al.*; Ó Corráin, 'Women in Early Irish Society'; McAll, 'Normal Paradigms'; Bitel, *Land of Women*, pp. 4–11 and 111–40.

³ Oxenham, *Perceptions of Femininity*, p. 3.

⁴ It is generally assumed that the authors of these sources were male and educated in an ecclesiastical context (see McCone, *Pagan Past*, pp. 22–8; Herbert, 'The World, the Text and the Critic', p. 4). The possibility of female authors has been discussed in the case of medieval Europe more broadly (see Dronke, *Women Writers*, and the essays collected in *Medieval Women Writers*, ed. Wilson), and Clancy has considered the evidence for female poets in medieval Ireland ('Women Poets'). However, with medieval Irish literature, we are limited by the anonymity of most texts and so, since the majority of authors are likely to have been men, I will use the masculine pronoun in referring to them in this chapter, while acknowledging that female authorship always remains a possibility.

mythological origins, rather than on the text at the time it was composed or transmitted.⁵ A classic example is the identification of Medb as a sovereignty goddess, which arguably tends to impede the discussion of Medb's role as a literary figure.⁶ The danger of the reductive tendencies associated with this approach is, as Edel observes, neatly exemplified by Mac Cana, who asserts that Derdriu is 'an adaptation in human terms of the archetypal goddess figure ... in common, it might be said, with virtually all the other heroines of medieval Irish literature'.⁷ Therefore, this study will consider the women in the text as they are presented – that is, as women – rather than looking for mythological explanations for their behaviour.

The traditional view of medieval societies is that they were oppressive, or at least restrictive, towards women, that since medieval Europe was patriarchal, women as a group were socially inferior and confined to a narrower sphere of action than men,⁸ and this concept has permeated scholarship on medieval Ireland. The society represented in early Irish legal texts was inegalitarian and carefully stratified, and it has been argued that women were at the bottom of this stratification on account of their perceived inferiority.⁹ The role of the Church in the subjugation of women in medieval Europe has also been postulated, based on the claim that Christianity viewed women as the source of all temptation and evil for men (deriving from the first woman, Eve) and so needing to be suppressed. Alternatively, medieval Christianity is said to have put women on a pedestal, requiring them to be as pure as Mary, Christ's mother, in itself another form of suppression. In Garber's words, 'Eve and Mary represent the two most common feminine exempla offered to medieval women ... as the negative and positive poles of female exemplarity'.¹⁰ Scholarship tends to focus more on the negative aspect of portrayals of women; as Oxenham states, 'there is a common assumption in current literature that medieval societies generally believed women to be dangerously and particularly sinful, in their role as daughters of Eve, the first woman, who through her wiles and deception caused the first man, Adam, to fall from grace'.¹¹ Such attitudes may be found in the works of the early Church Fathers (especially Augustine, Tertullian, Jerome and Origen) who stated that women, and more specifically the physicality and sexuality of women, were responsible for the world's evils.¹² For example, Tertullian (in the early third century) told women: *Tu es diaboli ianua*, and argued that women not only sinned themselves, but through their

⁵ Findon, *Woman's Words*, p. 8.

⁶ See, for example, Ó Maille, 'Medb Chruachna', pp. 140–5; Ní Bhrolcháin, 'Women in Early Irish Myths', pp. 12–15.

⁷ Mac Cana, 'Women in Irish Mythology', p. 9; see Edel, 'Caught Between History and Myth?', p. 163.

⁸ See, for example, Bitel, *Women in Early Medieval Europe*, p. 8; Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny*, pp. 24–7; Aspegren, *Male Woman*, pp. 13–14; Burrus, *Chastity*, pp. 68 and 90.

⁹ See, for example, Bitel, *Land of Women*, pp. 8–9 and 19–21; Jaski, 'Marriage Laws', pp. 17–19; Condren, *The Serpent and the Goddess*, p. 78.

¹⁰ Garber, *Feminine Figurae*, p. 33; see also Ní Dhonnchadha, 'Mary, Eve and the Church', pp. 45–57; Wood, 'Women in Myths', pp. 20–1.

¹¹ Oxenham, *Perceptions of Femininity*, p. 158; see Bitel, *Women in Early Medieval Europe*, pp. 97 and 103–7; Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny*, p. 91; Ní Bhrolcháin, 'Re Tóin Mná', p. 116; Bray, 'Image of St. Brigit', p. 213; Johnston, 'Transforming Women', p. 209.

¹² Brundage, *Law, Sex*, p. 64; Harrington, *Women in a Celtic Church*, p. 272.

subtlety and beauty lured men into sin.¹³ These patristic sources were continually drawn on by medieval authors, including in medieval Ireland, and so may be expected to have exerted a strong influence on medieval thought.

Bitel's monograph, *Land of Women*, is a particularly prominent example of the argument that medieval Irish texts display a profoundly negative attitude towards women, commenting on 'the dominance of misogynist ideas in the written literature' and 'the formal misogyny hurled at [women] from the texts of the literati'.¹⁴ Her work emphasises the legal and social inferiority of women, suggesting a process of deliberate suppression by men in both textual sources and 'real life'.¹⁵ Certainly there are medieval Irish texts which do display an overt and vehement hatred of women, such as the famous anti-woman diatribe found in the ninth-century wisdom text, *Tecosca Cormaic*. This lists female vices (including among many: *báetha comairle, feidle miscne, dermatcha seirce, étaireise rune, inire debtha, eitche trebaire, fossaide im thoil*),¹⁶ and is frequently cited as proof that early Irish society was highly 'misogynistic'.¹⁷ The violence of this text's hatred towards women is palpable, explicitly advising men not to trust them: *fó cách náchasríaraig, a n-úaman amail tenid, a n-ecla mar fiadmíla ... ferr a foimtiu a tairisi ... ferr a ndinge a ngrádugud*.¹⁸ O'Leary also comments on the 'pronounced distrust and at times hatred' of women found in certain medieval Irish texts, observing that 'women frequently appear as treacherous, often unmotivatedly so'.¹⁹ His examples include Bláthnat, the wife of Cú Roí; Bríg Brethach, who causes the death of Blai Briuga and of her husband Celtchar; the wife of Rónán, whose deceit results in the destruction of all around her; and Mongfind, the jealous wife of Eochaid Muigmedón, who attempts to cause the death of the young Níall Noígiallach and his mother Cairenn.

This assumption of the negative attitude towards women held by authors of medieval Irish texts has been offered as one explanation for the paradox which confused scholars for some time: how could a society that, from the evidence of law-texts and annals, seemed to restrict the powers and freedom of women, produce a literature which features so many strong, independently-minded women?²⁰ One approach was to suggest that all such women were actually symbolic, mythological figures, such as

¹³ *De Cultu Feminarum* (ed. Marra, p. 2; my transl.): 'you are the door of the devil'.

¹⁴ Bitel, *Land of Women*, pp. 19 and 137. Note that the use of 'misogyny', a modern term, is highly problematic when applied to the medieval period, since the application of modern concepts to medieval attitudes is arguably inappropriate. Moreover, 'misogyny' formally means 'hatred of women', yet frequently texts displaying attitudes other than simple hatred are also bracketed under the label 'misogynistic'.

¹⁵ Note that Johnston criticises Bitel's lack of specificity regarding the date of her sources and the possibility of change over time; rather, as she states, 'Bitel indulges in the sweeping statement' ('Review', p. 403).

¹⁶ *Tecosca Cormaic* (ed. and transl. Meyer, §16): 'silly counsellors', 'steadfast in hate, forgetful of love', 'not to be trusted with a secret', 'viragos in strife', 'rejecting wisdom', 'persevering in lust'.

¹⁷ See, for example, Bitel, *Land of Women*, pp. 24–30, 68 and 158.

¹⁸ *Tecosca Cormaic* (ed. and transl. Meyer, §16): 'happy he who does not yield to them, they should be dreaded like fire, they should be feared like wild beasts ... better to beware of them than to trust them ... better to crush them than to cherish them'.

¹⁹ O'Leary, 'Honour of Women', p. 43.

²⁰ See Kelly, *Guide*, pp. 68–78; Mac Cana, 'Women in Irish Mythology', p. 10.

sovereignty goddesses.²¹ However, another argument is that in fact none of the independently-acting women in these tales exercise power successfully, but must always be shown to fail, in order to convey the message that such behaviour is not permissible. An extreme example of this type of scholarship may be found in Ní Bhrolcháin's article, '*Re Tóin Mná*: In Pursuit of Troublesome Women'. In her view, medieval Irish literature contains two female paradigms, 'one beneficial, positive and passive, the second malevolent, negative and independent and it is the latter which abound' (as examples, she gives Medb and Derdriu).²² Ní Bhrolcháin examines ways in which such 'troublesome women' may be said to be criticised and punished in medieval Irish literature as a warning to the female audience of the tales, and argues that the primary aim of medieval Irish authors was 'teaching women that their position in society's structure was fixed and that rebellion or independent action would not be tolerated'.²³ The character of Medb has been a particular focal point for studies of the depiction of this type of woman in medieval Irish literature and is frequently given as the archetypal example of Ní Bhrolcháin's 'troublesome' woman.²⁴ Kelly analyses Medb's portrayal in *TBC* from this perspective, arguing that the negative depiction of Medb was a central aim for the author(s) of the *Táin*, who sought to show that Medb 'has usurped a man's function, and this is what has doomed the expedition from the start'.²⁵ Other women have also been viewed as such exempla, including the historical figure Gormlaith, the wife of Brían Bórama, a character who prompts Ní Dhonnchadha to assert that 'almost invariably, a negative representation is given to a quest by a woman for an association with – or freedom of action in – the public sphere equal to men's'.²⁶

On the other hand, certain scholars have sought a more nuanced view. In a recent study, *Perceptions of Femininity in Early Irish Society*, Oxenham seeks to reconsider sweeping generalisations made about medieval Irish perceptions of women through careful analysis of sources dating from the fifth to the ninth century, taking into account individual authorial agendas, contexts and limitations of genre.²⁷ Other scholars have argued that the duality of positive/passive and negative/active is too simplistic, and that in fact women may be shown to be active within the 'acceptable' sphere of female behaviour. For example, Findon examines how Emer is far from passive in her use of speech to

²¹ See p. 164.

²² Ní Bhrolcháin, '*Re Tóin Mná*', p. 115. I find this classing-together of Medb and Derdriu problematic, given the vast differences in their characterisation and situation within their respective tales.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 116–17.

²⁴ For example, by Ní Dhonnchadha, 'Gormlaith and her Sisters', p. 168; Bitel, *Land of Women*, pp. 70 and 213.

²⁵ Kelly, '*Táin* as Literature', p. 79; see pp. 78–87.

²⁶ Ní Dhonnchadha, 'Gormlaith and her Sisters', p. 167.

²⁷ One example of Oxenham's reassessment is the issue of honour-price. Irish law states that a woman is assigned half her husband's honour-price, which has led to the widespread belief that all adult women were legally and socially inferior to men (see, for example, Ó Corráin, 'Early Medieval Law', pp. 7–8; Bitel, *Land of Women*, pp. 20–2). However, Oxenham makes the point that half the honour-price of a high-status husband would still give his wife a higher honour-price than that of lower classes of men: 'women are clearly usually assigned lower honour-price than their husbands because of their position as wife: their position is based on their dependency. It is not true, however, that women as a group are represented in the early Irish legal sources as legally inferior to men as a group' (*Perceptions of Femininity*, pp. 48–9).

challenge the codes of heroic society, and yet receives a ‘uniformly positive portrayal’.²⁸ Similarly, Toner observes that ‘feminist criticism has divided women into whores, saints, and demure wives, but little attention has been paid to date to a category of independent-minded wives who are portrayed in secular narrative in favourable terms’.²⁹ In his consideration of the female characters in *Aided Óenfhir Aífe* and *Noínden Ulad*, he concludes that ‘while Emer in *Aided Óenfhir Aífe* represents restraint, the wife of Crunnchu in *Noínden Ulad* epitomizes fairness and justice in the face of the hyper-competitiveness of the warrior code’; thus, ‘they appear to represent a higher order which is distinct from, and superior to, the heroic order with which it clashes’.³⁰

Meanwhile, Clancy argues that ‘the presumption of clerical misogyny seems to be based on a thin biblical diet, largely the Mary-Eve dichotomy’.³¹ He points to models of positive yet active female behaviour found in the Bible, such as Deborah, Esther, Ruth and the figure of Wisdom in Proverbs. Deborah is a significant example, as a woman from the Old Testament who exercises political power successfully. Kelly observes that Medb in the *Táin* may be understood as Deborah’s diametrical opposite, since Deborah overcomes tribal divisions among the Israelites to unite them against the Canaanites and prophesies the outcome of a battle successfully (namely that victory will be achieved by a woman, Jael) – while Medb is a failure as a political leader, succumbing to tribal jealousies, and ignores Fedelm’s prophecy.³² Although Kelly is referring to a negative portrayal of a female character here, her argument still indicates Deborah’s potential as a source of inspiration for medieval Irish writers and does not preclude the possibility that she might have been used in medieval Irish literature as a model for the positive exercise of female political power as well. Moreover, Harrington challenges the assumption of the Church’s negative attitude towards women in medieval Ireland, claiming that religious women at least were held in high regard (although she does note that, from the tenth century onwards, broader trends in Europe, which saw an increase in negative views of women, were felt in Ireland to some extent).³³ Nevertheless, Harrington’s argument does contain the corollary that laywomen were still viewed negatively within medieval Irish society, since she argues that the religious woman was viewed positively because of ‘her ability to transcend the limitations of her sex’.³⁴ Such a view is challenged by Findon’s argument that secular literary characters such as Emer could be used to

²⁸ Findon, *Woman’s Words*, p. 20.

²⁹ Toner, ‘Wise Women’, pp. 259–60. He returns to the theme of beneficial female advice (which men sometimes foolishly ignore) in his analysis of *Serglige Con Culainn* (‘Tale of Two Wives’, pp. 136–8).

³⁰ Toner, ‘Wise Women’, pp. 266 and 272.

³¹ Clancy, ‘Court, King and Justice’, p. 179, n. 76. Moreover, even in the case of Eve, it has been noted that her portrayal in medieval Irish sources is not invariably negative, but sometimes even sympathetic (for example, in *Saltair na Rann*); see Oxenham, *Perceptions of Femininity*, pp. 159–62; Findon, *Woman’s Words*, p. 15; Harrington, *Women in a Celtic Church*, pp. 273–9.

³² Kelly, ‘*Táin* as Literature’, p. 85.

³³ Harrington, *Women in a Celtic Church*, for example, pp. 71 and 192. She is critical of Bitel’s arguments that the medieval Irish church held a negative attitude towards female spirituality, seeking to contain women in female communities: ‘when religious women escaped the enclosure, they became a threat to society, to male monastic society in particular’ (Bitel, ‘Women’s Monastic Enclosures’, p. 31; see Harrington, *Women in a Celtic Church*, p. 130).

³⁴ Harrington, *Women in a Celtic Church*, p. 139; also pp. 138, 153–4 and 285.

represent a more just, reasonable and compassionate approach, and that ‘Emer’s identification with the ideals of the Christian church seems to imply a greater fluidity (at least in medieval Ireland) of ecclesiastical views concerning women and their speech than has been hitherto acknowledged’.³⁵

In spite of such arguments and exceptions, the assumption that medieval Irish authors held an attitude towards their female characters that ranged from, at best, suppression into passive non-characters, to, at worst, mistrust and even violent hatred has remained prevalent. Studies that seek to challenge this assumption tend to focus on tales which contain a single female character who does not fit the expected pattern. I offer the extraordinary range of female characters in *TF* as evidence that, not only does this negative paradigm not always apply, but it may in fact need rewriting completely. I approach the analysis of the female characters in *TF* by considering their relation to the tale’s structure.³⁶ The tale falls quite naturally into two halves, the first half concerned with the events leading up to Maine’s death (his arrival at Dúnad Geirg, Conchobar’s vision and attack, Gerg’s death followed by Maine’s), and the second with the aftermath of his death, slightly overlapping with the first half but forming a separate narrative strand (Medb’s vision, Ferb’s laments, the arrivals of Fíannamail and Domnall at Dúnad Geirg and their subsequent deaths, Medb’s final defeat by Conchobar and Ferb’s death). I will analyse *TF* in terms of these two distinct halves.

Female Characters in the First Half of Tochmarc Ferbe

Ferb

The first half of *TF* is essentially male-dominated: female characters do not feature prominently, and are largely confined to the ‘traditional’ female roles to which we are accustomed in medieval Irish literature. Ferb herself only appears once in the first half, in §2 when Maine is approaching Dúnad Geirg and she sends her foster-sister Findchóem to observe the arrival of him and his troops. However, the main function of this scene is not to elucidate the female protagonist but rather the male protagonist, as Findchóem’s report is a vehicle for telling us more about Maine and his troop and heightening the anticipation of the occupants of Dúnad Geirg (and the audience) for their arrival. Apart from this brief mention, Ferb does not appear again in the first half of the tale, despite the fact that marriage with her is Maine’s reason for journeying to Dúnad Geirg.

Nuagel

Ferb’s mother, Nuagel also only has one appearance, in §7, taking the role of lamenter when Gerg has been killed: *Is and trá at-raacht Nuagel ingen Ergi .i. ben Geirg 7 do-rat a trí foídi ferggacha*

³⁵ Findon, *Woman’s Words*, p. 138.

³⁶ Note that the LL-prose is acephalous and so we cannot talk with absolute certainty regarding the tale’s structure. However, Windisch argues that there cannot have been much text lost (see ‘Textual Notes’, p. 86), while marking Maine’s death as the turning-point of the narrative seems plausible whatever has been lost.

*guil esti, & ro gab cend a fir ina hucht.*³⁷ Lamenting is a role often traditionally associated with women, in a wide variety of cultures.³⁸ Within *TF* itself, Ferb also performs several laments.³⁹ In these, she refers to other women who will be affected by these deaths; for example, in her second lament for Maine, she reminds us that Maine has a sister, Finnabair, who will be waiting for news:

*Olc in scél bērthair sár
co Finnabair na nglangīall:
tāsc a brāthar dī co feirg,
is a esbaid ar glan-Ēirb.*⁴⁰

In her lament for the Connacht warriors, Ferb states: *Mór mban da-gēna ‘uch, ach’ / i ndegaid na ro-ūallach.*⁴¹ Thus these examples suggest that it is the fate of women to be left behind during fighting and to mourn the resultant deaths after it has ended. Female characters from other medieval Irish tales also perform this role, most famously Derdriu in *LMU*. When Noísiu has been killed, Derdriu’s response is that for a year *ni-tib gen ngáire ocus ni-dóid a sáith do búd na cotluth ocus ni-túargaib a cenn dia glún*; instead she spends her time reciting laments for Noísiu.⁴²

Lamenting is often seen as passive behaviour, since it makes no attempt to remedy the loss but merely comments on its occurrence; as Findon notes, ‘women often seem restricted to complaining about or lamenting events which they are powerless to control or change’.⁴³ On the other hand, the very act of commenting on the loss might be viewed as a reaction against the powerlessness of a speaker’s situation: even if they can do nothing else, they can at least vocalise their response. Speech-act theorists would argue that speech itself should be viewed as an action,⁴⁴ and lamenting would thereby represent one type of speech act.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, it could perhaps still be argued that lamenting is not as active a response as certain other responses would be (taking vengeance, for example), as indeed is illustrated in this tale. The passivity seemingly inherent in lament may be because the role of lamenter tends to be associated with powerlessness: lamenting is the only response left available in a tragic situation. Men as well as women find themselves in such a situation – for example, Cú Chulainn after the death of Fer

³⁷ *TF*, ll. 194–5: ‘Then Nuagel daughter of Erg, namely the wife of Gerg, arose and she let out her three angry cries of lamenting, and she took the head of her husband into her lap’.

³⁸ Fry, *Burial in Medieval Ireland*, pp. 84–7; Bromwich, ‘Keen for Art O’Leary’, pp. 240 and 248–52.

³⁹ Hollo notes the resemblances between the laments found in *TF* and *ModÍr caointe*, especially regarding their thematic concerns: ‘the praise of the hero (martial qualities, beauty, noble birth, generosity), the sorrow of the lamenter, and the sorrow of others (especially other women)’ (‘Laments and Lamenting’, p. 87, n. 18).

⁴⁰ *TF*, ll. 600–3: ‘Terrible is the tale which will be carried westwards / to Finnabair of the pure hostages: / the news of the death of her brother [will be carried] angrily to her, / and his loss for fair Ferb’.

⁴¹ *TF*, ll. 512–13: ‘Many women will say ‘uch, ach’ / after the loss of the very proud ones’.

⁴² *LMU* (ed. and transl. Hull, §17): ‘she did not smile a laughing smile, and she did not partake of her sufficiency of food or of sleep, and she did not raise her head from her knee’. Further examples include Créide’s lament for Cáel in *AnS* (ed. Stokes, ll. 843–64) and Emer’s for Cú Chulainn in *Brisleach Mór Maige Muirthemni* (ed. Kimpton, §§33–5); see also examples in Hollo, ‘Laments and Lamenting’.

⁴³ Findon, *Woman’s Words*, p. 39.

⁴⁴ Austin, *How to Do Things*; Searle, *Speech Acts*; Searle, ‘Classification of Illocutionary Acts’.

⁴⁵ See, for example, Straus, ‘Women’s Words as Weapons’, in relation to the Old English poem *The Wife’s Lament*.

Diad or Rónán after the death of Máel Fhothartaig.⁴⁶ Even so, the aspect of powerlessness that results in lament means that gender still plays a part, since women in particular are frequently left in a position of powerlessness when a male relative or associate is killed; for this reason, women are often found in the role of lamenter. Nuagel's lament does not prompt any further action by anyone else and she then disappears from the narrative, meaning that she can arguably be termed a relatively passive character in the tale.

In terms of what Nuagel actually says in her lament, particular attention might be drawn to her opening stanza:

*Iss é Gerg so ina ligi;
is tria chin a ingini,
is triana cin atá sund,
in tarbech sínte [i] comlund.*⁴⁷

The word *cin* 'fault' also means 'sin, crime', and so is a word heavily laden with negative connotations. This placing of blame on Ferb might be taken as an example of medieval Irish antipathy towards women, since it is clear to us as modern readers that there is no justifiable way in which Ferb can be blamed for Gerg's death. However, it should be noted that this is only Nuagel's opinion – it is nowhere presented as the author's opinion – and in fact may simply be a realistic and well-observed portrayal of how people do respond to grief, by seeking somewhere to place blame, however irrationally. Elsewhere in the text, other characters assign blame differently for the tragic outcome of the tale. Based on parallels in other medieval Irish texts, we might expect Ferb to blame herself (as Finnabair does in *TBC: Atchúala sain Findabair in comlín sain d'fëraib Hérend do thuttim trena ág 7 trena accais, 7 ro maid cnómaidm dá cride 'na clíab ar fëile 7 náre*).⁴⁸ However, Ferb does not blame herself; rather, in spite of her grief for his loss, she definitively blames Maine. In her first lament, there are hints of this blame – *olc sén i tānac ó[t] tig; / bid mana dér rit muntir; / sochaide dia tartais olc* – but by her final lament, she is more explicit: *Do-dechaid dít ar n-amles. / Is triut ro marbad m'athair; / ropo deglāech degathaig. / Is triut*

⁴⁶ *TBC-LL*, ll. 3414–3595; *Fingal Rónáin* (ed. Greene, ll. 168–83 and 197–244). In these two male examples, both men were coerced into a position where they themselves killed the loved one, and so their powerlessness is a result of a combination of grief, guilt and inability to exact revenge. A non-Irish example of male lament is Achilles' lament for Patroclus in the *Iliad* (18.80–126).

⁴⁷ *TF*, ll. 199–202: 'This is Gerg lying here; / it is through the fault of his daughter, / it is through her fault that he is here, / the strong man laid low in battle'.

⁴⁸ *TBC-LL*, ll. 3886–8: 'Findabair heard that this number of men of Ireland had fallen because of her and on account of her, and her heart cracked like a nut in her breast through shame and modesty'. This response is also characteristic of female characters in medieval Welsh literature; for example, Branwen in the Second Branch of the Mabinogion states: '*Guae ui o'm ganedigaeth. Da a dwy ynys a diffeithwyt o'm achaws i.*' A *dodi ucheneit uawr, a thorri y chalon ar hynny*' (*Branwen uerch Lyr* (ed. Thomson, ll. 407–8; my transl.): "Woe that I was ever born, for two good islands have been destroyed in my account". And giving a great sigh, thereupon her heart broke'); while Heledd, the lamenter in *Canu Heledd*, also blames herself in some way for the death of her brothers: *Brodyr am bwyat a duc duw ragof. / vy anffawt ae goruc* (*Canu Heledd* (ed. and transl. Rowland, §86): 'I had brothers whom God took from me. / My misfortune caused it').

*ro marbad a mac: / nī hassa dam a dermat. / Is triut do-gēntar mór d’ulc.*⁴⁹ Blame might also be assigned to Brod, who actually killed Gerg (as Nuagel herself acknowledges: *Rot gáet Brod is níro dlig*);⁵⁰ to Bricriu, who taunted Maine about his courage; to Maine for ignoring his druid’s interpretation of the bad omen; or to the Otherworldly woman, who prompted Conchobar’s involvement in the first place.⁵¹ Therefore, we must consider Nuagel’s blame of Ferb within this broader context, as only one of a number of options, none of which is explicitly signalled by the author as being his own opinion – rather, he leaves the audience to decide.

Mugain

Another female character who features in the first half of the tale is Conchobar’s wife Mugain. In her brief appearance in §4, she adopts the role of peacemaker, since when Conchobar tells her of the Otherworldly woman’s instructions to attack Dúnad Geirg, her response is: *Is lór ém fil chena etrund 7 Connachta*.⁵² In this respect, she stands in stark contrast to essentially all other characters in the tale, who, for various reasons, are eager to enter into conflict. She acts as the voice of peace and reason, offering a challenge to the (largely) male world of aggression ruled by the dictates of the heroic code, as Emer does in *Aided Óenfhir Aífe* when she seeks to dissuade Cú Chulainn from killing his own son.⁵³ The role of women in peace-making is a theme found elsewhere in medieval Irish texts, possibly illustrated in *Bretha Crólige*, a legal text dating from the first half of the eighth century, which lists *ben sues sruta cocta for cula* among high-status women for whom sick-maintenance is replaced by a fixed fee.⁵⁴ Although glosses on the passage give the abbess of Kildare as an example of this, interpreting peace-making as a role for religious women,⁵⁵ another legal text (on *díre* ‘honour price’), dating from the seventh or eighth century, refers to *[s]ues srotha .i. suides cotha 7 essidha .i. banrigan a seite[h]e*, indicating that this text considered this to have been a role for queens to perform.⁵⁶ Edel comments on the literary and historical role of queens as ‘peace-weavers’, a role we can arguably see Mugain attempting to perform here.⁵⁷ Her advice is not taken, however, meaning that as a character she is

⁴⁹ *TF*, ll. 341–3: ‘inauspicious was the omen with which you came from your house; / it will be a cause of tears for your followers; / there is a multitude to whom you have given misfortune’; ll. 575–80: ‘Our misfortune came from you. / It is on account of you that my father was killed; / he was a good warrior descended from a good fighter. / It is on account of you that his son was killed: / it is not easy for me to forget it. / It is on account of you that much evil will be done’.

⁵⁰ *TF*, l. 231: ‘Brod killed you and he was not entitled to’.

⁵¹ *TF*, §§2–4.

⁵² *TF*, l. 102: ‘But there is already enough [conflict] between us and the Connachta’.

⁵³ *Aided Óenfhir Aífe* (ed. van Hamel, §8); see Findon, *Woman’s Words*, pp. 84–5 and 104–5; Toner, ‘Wise Women’, pp. 260–3.

⁵⁴ *Bretha Crólige* (ed. and transl. Binchy, §32): ‘a woman who turns back the streams of war’.

⁵⁵ In a contrasting interpretation, Ó Corráin observes that some commentators think that this designation refers to a female military leader (‘Early Medieval Law’, p. 31).

⁵⁶ *Díre* (ed. Thurneysen, §1; my transl.): ‘she who turns rivers, that is, who turns wars and discords, that is, a queen consort’; see Oxenham, *Perceptions of Femininity*, p. 101.

⁵⁷ Edel, ‘Early Irish Queens’, pp. 3–4. For a discussion of the term ‘peace-weaver’, which originates as a translation of Old English *freoðuwebbe*, see Sklute, ‘*Freoðuwebbe*’; Luecke, ‘Unique Experience’, pp. 56–9.

somewhat side-lined.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, she does still function as a moderating influence, as she next counsels Conchobar to consult with Cathbad before taking further action, advice which Conchobar does heed. Mugain evinces a measured response in a tale where many actions are taken based on hasty decisions (such as Maine's response to Bricriu's taunts in §2, or Gerg's immediate pledge of support to Maine in §3).⁵⁹ We are clearly meant to view her positively, since if Conchobar had taken her advice, the tragic outcome of the tale would have been avoided. But overall she appears as a passive character, since her advice is largely ignored, and this is reinforced at the end of the tale, where she is depicted as waiting patiently at home while Conchobar is fighting and then listening to his account afterwards: *Imthigid Conchobar co mbúaid 7 choscur co rocht co Emain 7 ad-fét a scéla ó thús co dered do Mugain*.⁶⁰

The Female Messenger

So far, it can be seen that, in the first half of *TF*, female characters make only brief appearances and perform roles that do not impact on the plot and may be considered as passive. Nevertheless, even in the first half of the tale, there are already hints that this author has a particular and unusual interest in female characters. Take, for instance, the scene of Maine's arrival in §2 already mentioned, in which the author displays an unusual propensity for including female characters, something which characterises his approach in the rest of the tale. Besides Ferb, we also have her foster-sister Findchóem, who only appears in this scene. This scene contains elements of the 'watchman device', in which an observer reports back on the appearance of an approaching army.⁶¹ This role is also performed by a woman in *Fled Bricrend* (here the watchman is Finnabair), and it seems natural that Ferb should send a female companion to report on the appearance of her husband-to-be.⁶² More unexpected is the presence of a *bé thastil* 'female messenger'. In this scene she is mentioned twice, first rather obliquely: *Īar rochtain trā do bé thastil co dūnud Geirg, ro gabad oc frithālim int slūaig and*; then shortly after, *foídis Erb a comalta .i. Findchōem ingen Ergi ar óen ri bé tastil do fēgad int slūaig amal ticfaitís*.⁶³ In both cases, *bé thastil* is indefinite so it is not even clear if they are the same person (she is never named in the tale) and the first appearance could seem to suggest that the first female messenger belonged to

⁵⁸ We might note that male advice is also ignored in this tale, since in §3 Maine ignores his druid's advice to leave Dúnad Geirg in response to the evil omen of the mighty wind.

⁵⁹ Toner has observed that *Aided Óenfhir Aife* seems to contain a similar message of moderation: 'the tale is really aimed against belligerence rather than war itself. It is not a pacifist statement, but a warning to heed calls of restraint (*cosc*)' ('Wise Women', p. 263). Likewise, although *TF* cannot be said to have an anti-violence message (since Ferb's incitement and Medb's vengeance later on are not criticised), it does seem to offer a critique of rash behaviour, which can lead to tragic consequences.

⁶⁰ *TF*, l. 631: 'Conchobar went victoriously and triumphantly until he arrived at Emain and he told his tidings to Mugain from beginning to end'.

⁶¹ Sims-Williams, 'Riddling Treatment', p. 84.

⁶² *Fled Bricrend* (ed. Henderson, §§44–52).

⁶³ *TF*, ll. 43–5: 'Then after a female messenger reached Gerg's fort, preparation for the host was begun there'; 'Ferb sent her foster-sister, namely Findchóem daughter of Erg, together with a female messenger to observe the host as they came'.

Maine's troop and was reporting ahead. However, since a female messenger also features later in the tale, the simplest explanation is probably that this is always the same character, who is attached to Dúnad Geirg. Later on in the tale, the female messenger accompanies Ferb to view Maine's body in §11 and to greet Domnall in §14 (and possibly also Fíannamail in §12).⁶⁴ In the scene of Domnall's arrival, we hear the female messenger speak, commenting on Domnall's abilities: *Maith é a llus gaí 7 claidib Domnall Derg mac Dubáin. Lond fri úair ngascid cách tānic and, 7 ropad mór a chobair dia chomaltu dīana tairsed ina bethaid*.⁶⁵ Arguably, Findchóem and the female messenger are doublets of one another, fulfilling a role as Ferb's female attendant. One might question why, if the author already had a character who fits more logically into the story (Ferb's named foster-sister), would he also add an unnamed female attendant. Given the apparent direct borrowing from *TBF* of the description of the host's arrival, it may be that the character of Findchóem was simply invented to provide an equivalent 'watchman' for this scene, while the *bé thastil* was a more constant figure throughout the narrative.⁶⁶ In any case, I consider this recurrence of an explicitly female messenger to be symptomatic of this author's interest in female characters and tendency to introduce them into his story.

Cathach

Another example indicative of this author's willingness to include female characters in his story (and in this case performing an active role) is in Conchobar's army of Fomorians. The leaders of this army are all male, except for Cathach Catutchend 'the Hard-headed', who is given first in the list of the leaders' names in §5:

*Is and sin do-roacht Cathach Catutchend ingen Dímóir co Emain. Bangaiscedach amra ī-side. A īathaib Espáni tānic ar šeirc Con Culainn co Emain. Do-chuaid issin sochraite sin ar ōen ri Conchobar. Do-riachtatar dano trīar amra a finib Fomórach and, fo blad barbardachta [í]ad .i. Sīabarchend mac Súlremair, & Berngal Brec, 7 Būri Borbbríathrach. Do-rocht dano and Fácen mac Dubloingsig do sentúathaib Ulad, & Fabric Fīacail Nemi asind Asia Móir, & Forais Fingalach a Manaind.*⁶⁷

The Fomorians or *Fomoiri* occur in medieval Irish literature as a monstrous race characterised by their enmity towards all inhabitants of Ireland. They function primarily as the supernatural opponents to the early settlers of Ireland before the Goidelic invasion of the Sons of Míl: for example, according

⁶⁴ See 'Textual Notes', nn. to ll. 43 and 416.

⁶⁵ *TF*, ll. 523–4: 'Good indeed by virtue of his spear and of his sword is Domnall Derg son of Dubán. Bold in a time of feats of arms is the one who has come there, and his help for his foster-brother would have been great if he had come to him while he was alive'.

⁶⁶ *TBF*, ll. 42–9; see 'Textual Correspondences', p. 86.

⁶⁷ *TF*, ll. 128–33: 'At that time Cathach Catutchend daughter of Dímór had come to Emain. She was a famous female-champion. She had come to Emain from the lands of Spain because of love for Cú Chulainn. She went into that army alongside Conchobar. Moreover three famous men from the races of the Fomorians came there – they were renowned for violence – namely Sīabarchend son of Súlremar and Berngal Brecc and Būri Borbbríathrach. Moreover there came Fácen son of Dubloingsech from the *Sentúatha Ulad*, and Fabric Fīacail Neime from Asia Minor, and Forais Fingalach from the Isle of Man'.

to the pseudo-historical compilation *Lebor Gabála Éirenn*, the settlement of Ireland by Nemed had to be abandoned due to attacks by the Fomorians, while the tale *Cath Maige Tuired* describes how the Túatha Dé Danann defeated the Fomorians in the Second Battle of Mag Tuired.⁶⁸ They tend to be portrayed negatively, engaging in disruptive activities such as plundering or demanding tribute. They are also often given monstrous characteristics in terms of physical deformity or supernatural abilities: for example, the Fomorians in Conaire's army in *TBDD* have *trí luirg fhíaclai ón huí diaraile ina cind*;⁶⁹ in *Lebor Gabála* Partholón defeats Fomorians *con óen-lámáib 7 con óen-chossaib*;⁷⁰ and in *Cath Maige Tuired* Balor has *suil milldagach* that can destroy hosts through *inn nem-sin*.⁷¹ Indeed, several texts, including *Sex Aetates Mundi*, list them among the monstrous progeny of Cain or of Cham son of Noah.⁷² Thus it seems likely that the name 'Fomorian' carried with it certain connotations of monstrosity.⁷³

The main 'monstrous' characteristic of the Fomorians in *TF* is their association with social transgression, a key aspect of monstrosity in medieval texts.⁷⁴ Their numbers include men *fo blad barbardachta*, with epithets such as *borbbríathrach* and *fíngalach*. Even their personal names hint at social transgression; for example, Fácen is the son of Dubloingsech 'the Black Exile' while Búri means 'rage, fury'. They also retain some supernatural abilities similar to those found in texts such as *Lebor Gabála* and *Cath Maige Tuired*, notably Fabric's *fíacail neime* (moreover, Síabarchend's name means 'spectre-head'). Their alterity is further revealed by their origins from lands outside of Ireland, such as Asia Minor and the Isle of Man.⁷⁵ In *TF* the Fomorians have been placed within the framework of human society and seem to be acting as foreign mercenaries in Conchobar's pay. This is not a role I have found attested elsewhere in relation to Fomorians,⁷⁶ but it arguably reflects the contemporary historical situation in the late MidIr period as Irish kings began to employ foreign military forces,

⁶⁸ O'Rahilly, *Early Irish History*, pp. 75, 313 and 523–5.

⁶⁹ *TBDD*, l. 923; my transl.: 'three rows of teeth from one ear to the other in their head'.

⁷⁰ *Lebor Gabála* (ed. and transl. Macalister, II, §202): 'with single arms and single legs'.

⁷¹ *Cath Maige Tuired* (ed. and transl. Gray, §133): 'an evil eye', 'that poisonous power'.

⁷² Rodway, 'Mermaids, Leprechauns'; Clarke, 'Lore of the Monstrous Races'.

⁷³ For some definitions of 'monstrosity', see, for example, Cohen, 'Monster Culture'; Olsen and Olsen, 'Introduction', pp. 6–12.

⁷⁴ For example, Neville has argued that, in the case of 'monstrous' characters in Old English literature (such as Grendel), 'it is the threat to society that determines their status as monsters', while 'human status is conferred on the basis of conformance to social rules' ('Monsters and Criminals', pp. 116–17).

⁷⁵ These locations (Spain, the Far East, the Isle of Man) further suggest that this author was tapping into the traditions reflected in *Lebor Gabála* and *Cath Maige Tuired*; see, for example, *Cath Maige Tuired* (ed. and transl. Gray, §13): *do neoch immorro térná de Feraib Bolc asin cath, lotar ar teched de saigid na Fomore gor gabsad a n-Árainn 7 a nd-Íle 7 a Manaidn 7 a Rachraind* ('then those of the Fir Bolg who escaped from the battle [against the Túatha Dé Danann] fled to the Fomoir, and they settled in Arran and in Islay and in Man and in Rathlin').

⁷⁶ The closest parallel I have found is in *TBDD*, l. 920, where Fomorians are fighting in Conaire's army as hostages (*i ngíallnae*).

especially from the Hebrides.⁷⁷ As Simms notes, ‘during the high middle ages in Ireland the single most important development in warfare was a constantly increasing reliance on mercenaries’.⁷⁸

As a member of this group of Fomorians, we must assume that Cathach is likewise to be viewed negatively as monstrous, certainly as ‘Other’. Her epithet *Catutchend* (‘the Hard-Headed’)⁷⁹ hints at possible supernatural abilities or non-human associations – it is used elsewhere as an epithet for Cú Chulainn’s sword.⁸⁰ Her foreign origins make her an outsider, while her status as *bangaiscedach* is one that transgresses the boundaries of acceptable female behaviour. Military action was perceived as a male domain, one from which women appear to have been largely excluded in ‘real’ life. As Ní Dhonnchadha states, ‘women’s active role in warfare was in reality extremely limited’.⁸¹ In spite of this, women warriors are a recurring feature of medieval Irish literature. The female warriors whom Cathach most closely resembles are Scáthach and Aífe, who train Cú Chulainn in combat in *Tochmarc Emire*. The similarities between these female warriors and Cathach are striking and perhaps even suggest that they might have been a model for our author. Scáthach and Aífe are also linked with a foreign location and are sexually associated with Cú Chulainn, like Cathach who *a iathaib Espáni tánic ar seirc Con Culainn co Emain*. Aífe is described as *in banfénnid ba hansam isin domun*, resembling Cathach’s status as *bangaiscedach amra*.⁸² Meanwhile, Scáthach’s name means ‘shadowy’ or ‘phantom’, and Cathach is accompanied by a warrior named *Siabarchend* ‘Spectre-head’ (the form of her name also resembles Scáthach’s own). Scáthach and Aífe are depicted as pre-eminent warriors: Cú Chulainn is told that *dia rised Scáthach do foglaím in míllti, ro derscaigfed curu Eorpa uile*, but even of Scáthach it is said that *ba homan lee Aífe, fo déig is side in banfénnid ba hansam isin domun*.⁸³ Scáthach teaches Cú Chulainn feats which are known by no one else, specifically the *gáe bolga* which allows him to kill Fer Diad in *TBC*, while Aífe almost defeats Cú Chulainn in combat: *docombai Aífe a harm ar Choin Chulainn conábo sía dorn a claideb*.⁸⁴ Cathach is similarly portrayed as a formidable

⁷⁷ While the term *gallóglach* for these warriors is not attested until the end of the thirteenth century, Duffy argues that this practice had already begun by the mid-twelfth century, the time at which the LL-prose seems to have been composed (‘Prehistory of the Galloglass’, pp. 1–7). Note Wadden’s argument that this practice may have a reflex in *CRR*, of a similar date to *TF* (‘*Cath Ruis na Ríg*’, pp. 15–21); see ‘Epilogue’, p. 201, on further resemblances between *TF* and *CRR*.

⁷⁸ Simms, ‘Gaelic Warfare’, p. 99.

⁷⁹ Not ‘Cat-Headed’, as mistranslated by Leahy (*Courtship of Ferb*, p. 14).

⁸⁰ *CRR*, §51: in *Cruadín Cotut-chend* ‘the Hard-Headed Cruadín’ (‘little steel thing’).

⁸¹ Ní Dhonnchadha, ‘Semantics of Banskál’, p. 31; see Kelly, *Guide*, p. 69.

⁸² *Tochmarc Emire* (ed. van Hamel, §75; my transl.): ‘the hardest female warrior in the world’. The designation *banfénnid* has further connotations of social transgression, since *fénnid* tends to refer to an outlaw-figure (McCone, ‘Werewolves’, pp. 3–6; Nagy, *Wisdom of the Outlaw*, pp. 18–21).

⁸³ *Tochmarc Emire* (ed. van Hamel, §§ 57 and 75; my transl.): ‘if he went to Scáthach to study the warrior’s art, he would surpass all the heroes in Europe’; ‘she dreaded Aífe because she was the most formidable female warrior in the world’.

⁸⁴ *Tochmarc Emire* (ed. van Hamel, §76; my transl.): ‘Aífe broke Cú Chulainn’s weapon, so that his sword was no longer than a fist’.

warrior in her encounter with Gerg in §6: *Is and sin do-dechaid Cathach Catutchend eturru 7 in dorus, 7 do-rat comrac féig fíhda dó-som*.⁸⁵

Women warriors occur in a wide range of other literary texts. Murray lists a number of women described as *banfénnidi*, including Conchobar's mother, Ness;⁸⁶ to his list might also be added the Amazons in *TTr*.⁸⁷ The Metrical *Dindshenchas* contains several women warriors, including those whose alterity is heightened by their foreign origins, such as Tephi, who shares Cathach's link with Spain.⁸⁸ Women warriors such as these are frequently depicted as threatening to the male heroes whom they oppose, while the social chaos and inverted worlds they create are antithetical to the norm of stable, ordered society. For example, Ó hUiginn comments that, in the land of Scáthach and Aífe in *Tochmarc Emire*, 'warlike women, unencumbered by male figures of authority and devoid of any familial loyalty, live in a social system in which the laws of marriage or sexual union do not function'.⁸⁹ It has been noted that women warriors are almost invariably defeated, either killed or 're-civilised' through sexual violence.⁹⁰ For example, Cathbad neutralises the threat posed by the *banfénnid* Ness by raping her, while Cú Chulainn defeats both Scáthach and Aífe in a manner that has clear sexual overtones.⁹¹ In this way, the literary world seems to have been used as a safe space for authors to consider such themes of social disruption and the overturning of expected gender roles, before concluding by reasserting social order. Note that Cathach herself is killed by Gerg early on in the narrative.

Nevertheless, the seemingly negative portrayal of this female character must not be considered in isolation, but in the context of the tale as a whole. Cathach is found alongside six named male Fomorians, all of whom have equally negative attributes, if not more so. Therefore, Cathach's killing cannot be interpreted simplistically as resulting from an authorial agenda against women warriors. All of the other Fomorians are also subsequently killed, and so this seems rather to be intended to contribute to a broader narrative illustrating the heroism of Maine, Gerg and Gerg's sons. Indeed, the Fomorians' main function in the narrative seems to be to reflect badly on Conchobar, for having stooped to hiring such a disreputable army. Therefore, even though Cathach's status as a female warrior seems to have been what qualifies her for inclusion in this 'monstrous' army, this is simply a trope being used by the author as part of his overall aims. The fact that she is a woman does not seem to have been this author's main concern; it is her function as 'one of the Fomorians' that drives her interaction with the plot. In

⁸⁵ *TF*, ll. 182–3: 'Then Cathach Catutchend came between him and the door, and she engaged him in fierce, furious combat'.

⁸⁶ Murray, *Early Finn Cycle*, pp. 62–3.

⁸⁷ *TTr*² (ed. Stokes, l. 1698); other terms for 'woman warrior' used in this passage include *banscál* (l. 1693) and *banmílíd* (l. 1700); see also 'Textual Notes', n. to l. 128.

⁸⁸ *Temair II* (ed. Gwynn, ll. 37–8); see also the *dindshenchas* of Carmun (ed. Gwynn, ll. 21–8), Dun Gabail (ed. Gwynn, ll. 9–12) and Tailtiu (ed. Gwynn, ll. 9–12).

⁸⁹ Ó hUiginn, *Marriage, Law*, p. 29.

⁹⁰ Bitel, *Land of Women*, p. 215.

⁹¹ *Scéla Conchobair* (ed. Stokes, §3); *Tochmarc Emire* (ed. van Hamel, §§71 and 76).

any case, we cannot even conclude that this text conveys a universally negative attitude towards women warriors in general, since Medb is also depicted as a female warrior and receives a positive portrayal.⁹²

The Otherworldly Woman

So, to summarise, female characters do not feature to a great extent in the first half of *TF*, which is dominated by the actions of male characters: Maine's arrival at Dúnad Geirg, Conchobar's attack, Maine's and Gerg's defence and their subsequent deaths. This is perhaps unsurprising, since these events are concerned with military matters, traditionally a male domain. The women perform roles which are familiar from female characters elsewhere in medieval Irish literature: observing male prowess, offering advice (which is ignored) and lamenting male deaths. Even the female warrior is a trope found elsewhere and, as with other female warriors, Cathach is ultimately subdued (in this case, killed).

None of these characters have any impact on the development of the plot. However, there is another female character who features in the first half, namely the Otherworldly woman, who does play a central role in plot development. In the first half of the tale, in §4, she visits Conchobar, informs him of Maine's presence at Dúnad Geirg and instructs him to launch an attack, prophesying victory for him:

'Secht mbliadna ó 'nocht,' ar sī, 'do-gēntar Táin Bó Cūalngi, 7 airgfitir Ulaid 7 bērthair in Dond Cūalngi; & mac ind fīr do-gēna sin .i. Mani Mórgor mac Ailella 7 Medba, do-dechaid do fēis la hEirb ingin nGeirg do Glind Ge[i]rg. Trī choīcait a lín. Ērig-siu,' ar sī, 'trī coīcait Fomōrach cucu 7 bid latt coscur'.⁹³

My interpretation of her advice to Conchobar is that she is inciting him to some form of 'advance-revenge' for the *Táin*, that Conchobar should kill the son of Ailill and Medb in retaliation for the fact that in seven years they will lay waste to Ulster. Part of it may also be, as Chadwin suggests, that Conchobar is seeking to hinder the progress of the *Táin* by removing one of Connacht's great warriors, Maine.⁹⁴ The Otherworldly woman is thus vital for the unfolding of the plot, so much so, in fact, that she appears to function more as a vehicle for plot development than as a fully-fledged character within the story. Her only role is to initiate the involvement of Conchobar (and later Medb in §9) in the tale. Indeed, her character may be argued to be largely symbolic, representing the willingness of the provinces of Ulster and Connacht, as they are represented in the Ulster Cycle, to enter into conflict on any pretext. Conchobar's motivation of 'pre-revenge' for the *Táin* seems a fairly flimsy one, suggesting that conflict is always ready to erupt at any time. As Dunn says, '[Otherworldly characters] can be

⁹² See p. 180.

⁹³ *TF*, ll. 97–100: 'Seven years from tonight,' she said, 'the Cattle-Raid of Cúailnge will be carried out, and the Ulaid will be slain and the Brown Bull of Cúailnge will be carried off; and the son of the man who will do that, namely Maine Mórgor, son of Ailill and Medb, has come to Glenn Geirg to a marriage-feast with Ferb daughter of Gerg. Their number is one hundred and fifty. Go,' she said, 'with one hundred and fifty Fomorians to meet them and victory will be with you.'

⁹⁴ Chadwin, '*Remscéla Tána Bó Cualngi*', p. 72.

construed as an embodiment of the forces that motivate mortal beings ... the supernatural figures mesh with the human in these stories in such a way that they function more as an embodiment of psychological motivation than as characters in the plot'.⁹⁵ In this way, the Otherworldly woman may be said to stand apart from the other women in the tale, who are more thoroughly integrated into the tale's action and are fully realised in terms of their characterisation and motivation.

The Otherworldly woman is the only female character whose activity straddles the two halves of the tale. This is consistent with the interpretation of her role as largely a plot vehicle rather than as a participating character, since the two major plot developments are the involvement of Conchobar and the involvement of Medb, both of which are brought about by her. She does not have a clear motivation for her actions of stirring up trouble between the two territories, which supports the view that her role is largely symbolic. It is tempting to assume that the explanation for her behaviour lies in the 'woman as troublemaker' trope, the view that troublemaking is inherent to womankind. Certainly this is a view that is exemplified in some texts, such as *Fingal Rónáin*, 'Finn and the Man in the Tree' and *Aided Muirchetaig mac Erca*; however, this should not be generalised to the assumption that the medieval Irish therefore automatically viewed all women as troublemakers. It should be noted that perhaps the most iconic troublemaker in medieval Irish literature is male, Bricriu Nemthenga, who in *Fled Bricrend* performs just such an act of spreading misinformation and inciting one against the other, by promising the *curadmír* 'champion's portion' simultaneously to Lóegaire, Conall Cernach and Cú Chulainn.⁹⁶ We even see Bricriu in this troublemaking role in *TF* (in §2), since he is the one who provokes Maine into staying longer in Conchobar's territory than is safe, thus indirectly causing his death.

Moreover, in the case of the Otherworldly woman in *TF*, it is likely that it is her Otherworldliness which casts her as a troublemaker rather than her femininity. There are several examples of both male and female Otherworldly figures who are defined by their desire to stir up trouble among mortals, suggesting that this was viewed as a potential function of the Otherworld, irrespective of gender. In *Táin Bó Regamna*, the Otherworldly troublemaker is female (Cú Chulainn encounters the Morrígan taking a cow from the *síd* of Cruachain to be bulled by the Brown Bull of Cúailnge, an act which will lead to the *Táin* taking place and hence to conflict between Ulster and Connacht), while in *TBD* it is an Otherworldly man and woman who perform a very similar role to the woman in *TF*, deliberately provoking conflict between Connacht and Munster (first by appearing to Ailill and advising him to send his son Orlám to carry off Dartaid and her cattle, then by appearing to Corp Liath in Munster and sending him against Orlám).⁹⁷ *MU* sets out the premise that it is a function of the Otherworld to provoke conflicts among mortals: *do-chuatar Túath Dé Danann i cnoccaib ... bar-fhácsat cúicfhiur díb ar comair cacha cóicid i nHérinn ic mórad chath 7 chongal 7 áig 7 urgaille etir Maccu Míled*; and the description of the Ulster host in this tale includes *trí sáermaccáemi Túathi Dé Danann ... táncatar sin*

⁹⁵ Dunn, *Cattle-Raids and Courtships*, pp. 46–7.

⁹⁶ *Fled Bricrend* (ed. Henderson, §§8–11).

⁹⁷ *Táin Bó Regamna* (ed. Windisch, §5); *TBD*, §§9–12.

dered aidchi indiu da mórad áig 7 urgaile, cu ras-mescsat iat arind shlúag (here male troublemakers).⁹⁸ Considering this wider context, then, we cannot necessarily take the character of the Otherworldly woman in *TF* as further evidence that the medieval Irish viewed women as troublemakers, since her Otherworldliness may have been the more important factor in this depiction.

Female Characters in the Second Half of Tochmarc Ferbe

Medb

The second appearance of the Otherworldly woman heralds the progression of the tale into its second, more female-dominated half. In the Otherworldly woman's visit to Medb in §9, we have the rare occurrence of witnessing an extended dialogue solely between two female characters.⁹⁹ It is noteworthy that, although Ailill is present (asleep), the Otherworldly woman addresses herself to Medb alone, and it is Medb that she instructs to take up the military role of avenger in response to Conchobar's attack on her son: *Eirg-siu innossa 7 no ndígēla ...*

*Érig is dīgail do mac,
tinóil cóiced Ól nÉcmacht.
Snaidfea na slúagu co serb,
mad dīa n-ēрге innossa, a Medb.*¹⁰⁰

When Medb wakes from her vision, we see an interesting reversal of the equivalent scene following Conchobar's vision in §4. When Conchobar wakes up, we are told: *bidgais Conchobar iar sin 7 dúscis a rīgain, 7 ad-fét dī a aislingi*.¹⁰¹ Meanwhile, when Medb, as the parallel recipient of the vision, wakes up, *dúscis Ailill, 7 ad-fét dó in fīs at-chonnairc, 7 ad-fét fon slúag iar sin*.¹⁰² This is the only mention Ailill gets in this scene, since it is Medb who assembles the Connacht army. This parallelism is significant with reference to the interpretation of the character of Mugain, since it clearly shows that the role of the passive spouse is not exclusively female in this tale: Ailill performs an almost exactly parallel role to Mugain – except that he is even more passive because he does not offer any advice, or indeed speak at all. Moreover, Ailill does not seem to accompany the army to Dúnad Geirg and does not feature in the battle. Medb is clearly placed in the position of command as the leader of the army: *togais Medb lé secht cét fer n-armach a n-as dech do-rala i Crūachain in tan sin*, and this episode ends

⁹⁸ *MU*, ll. 8–12 and ll. 574–8; my transl.: 'the Túatha Dé Danann went into the hills ... [but] they left five of their number for each province in Ireland to increase battles and conflicts and strife and combats among the Sons of Míl'; 'three noble youths of the Túatha Dé Danand ... they arrived at dawn today to stir up strife and contention, and they have mingled with the host'.

⁹⁹ *TF* also contains other dialogues solely between women, namely Findchóem's report to Ferb on Maine's arrival (§2) and the female messenger's comments to Ferb about Domnall (§14). Another such rare dialogue between two women occurs at the end of *Serglige Con Culainn* (see p. 197).

¹⁰⁰ *TF*, ll. 271 and 297–300: 'Go now and you will avenge him'; 'Arise and avenge your son, / assemble the province of Connacht. / You will grievously cut the hosts asunder, / if you arise now, o Medb'.

¹⁰¹ *TF*, l. 101: 'then Conchobar jumped up and he woke his queen, and he told her his vision'.

¹⁰² *TF*, l. 301: 'she woke Ailill, and she told to him the vision which she had seen, and after that she told [it] to the host'.

with the summary: *imthigis dano Medb iar sin ina réim ina ndíaid: Aslingi Medba connice sin 7 turthed a himthechta*, further signalling her prominent position in this author's view of her role in the tale.¹⁰³ In the description of Medb's military exploits in §16, we see that she is a proficient warrior, again in command of the army:

*Da-rocht dano Medb co secht cétaib léech lé co mboí ās cind ind āarmaige. Do-riñgni crúadchippi grinni bec dī, 7 torcaib idna catha rempi 7 ros dírig ar ammus Conchobair do dīgail a mmeicc 7 a muntire fair. ... Ro fuc Medb and-side Tolc Míled i cath na nUltach co torchair cóiciur lee, im dá mac Conchobair .i. im Níall Cendfind 7 im Feradach Lāmfofa.*¹⁰⁴

Thus she is shown to be an effective and valiant warrior, fighting in the thick of battle, even though she is ultimately defeated.¹⁰⁵ Her military behaviour is depicted as justified since she is seeking to avenge her son (and indeed does manage to avenge his foster-brothers Fiannamail and Domnall by killing their murderers, Níall and Feradach). The number of laments for the warriors of Connacht and Dúnad Geirg in this text indicate that our sympathies are very much intended to be on their side, and for this reason we also feel support for Medb in her endeavours. Overall then, in this tale, Medb is depicted in an essentially positive way. To those familiar with the character of Medb, and with the scholarship concerning her, this may come as something of a surprise.

When we think of the character of Medb, it is likely that her role in *TBC* is what immediately springs to mind. In the *Táin*, Medb and Ailill lead the army of Connacht into Ulster to capture the Brown Bull of Cúailnge. They are first held at bay by Cú Chulainn, and then defeated in battle by Conchobar and the men of Ulster. At first sight, there are a number of similarities between Medb's role in the *Táin* and in *TF*, both in her dominant leadership role and in her military prowess.¹⁰⁶ Although Ailill does feature more in the *Táin*, it is often the case that Medb seems to be the one in charge of the army. Not only does she instigate the whole raid (as she states in Recension I: *is mé dorinól in slúagad sa*),¹⁰⁷ frequently it is also she who gives orders to the troops, and she is the one who sends different warriors to fight against Cú Chulainn, offering them rewards if they do so. Her dominant role in her marriage and in the leadership of Connacht is observed by Fer Diad in both recensions (*dearb leam is tú is búachail ar Crúachain na clad*).¹⁰⁸ Medb fights as a warrior in the *Táin*: in both versions, she takes part

¹⁰³ *TF*, ll. 305–9: 'Medb selected to accompany her seven hundred armed men who were the best who were in Crúachain at that time'; 'then after that Medb set out on her course after them: the Vision of Medb thus far and the account of her exploits'.

¹⁰⁴ *TF*, ll. 608–14: 'Medb came with seven hundred warriors with her until she was overlooking the battlefield. She made a small hardened battle-formation out of a troop for herself, and she raised a battle standard before them, and she directed them [her troops] against Conchobar to take vengeance on him for her son and his followers. ... Then Medb brought [the weapon called] *Tolc Míled* into battle against the Ulaid so that five men fell at her hand, including Conchobar's two sons, namely Níall Cendfind and Feradach Lāmfofa'.

¹⁰⁵ This defeat should not preclude our positive interpretation of her in this tale; as Edel observes, 'indeed, not victory, but death and defeat on the battle-field are the epic themes *par excellence*' ('Early Irish Queens', p. 6, n. 31).

¹⁰⁶ For discussions of the historical reality of queens' power in medieval Ireland, see Edel, 'Early Irish Queens'; Oxenham, *Perceptions of Femininity*, pp. 94–102.

¹⁰⁷ *TBC-LU*, l. 26: 'it is I who have mustered this hosting'.

¹⁰⁸ *TBC-LU*, ll. 2656–7; *TBC-LL*, ll. 2697–8: 'I am certain that you are master in Crúachu'.

of the army off to do some separate plundering under her own leadership and defeats Findmór, the wife of Celtchar, in battle; she is one of the warriors who attacks Cethern; and she fights in the final battle. In Recension I, she is described as fighting valiantly and proficiently – *gabais Medb íarom a gaisced 7 forfóbair isin chath 7 maidter rempi fo thrí conad ed rosoí in cúal gaí fora cúlu* – while Ailill is not explicitly mentioned as fighting at all.¹⁰⁹ In Recension II, Ailill's involvement in the final battle is also mentioned, but Medb's military role is more prominent.¹¹⁰ *TBC* and *TF* are the only tales which I have found in which Medb takes part in battles and has the role of a female warrior.

The crucial difference between the two texts lies not so much in what Medb does, as in the way in which her actions are presented and judged. For example, in *TBC* her role as the instigator of the raid is shown to be a negative one, since her full statement is: *cach óen scaras sund trá indiu fria chóem 7 a charait, dobérat maldachtain form-sa úair is mé dorinól in slúagad sa*.¹¹¹ Her manner of sending warriors against Cú Chulainn is far from praiseworthy: on multiple occasions she sends several warriors at once, commanding: *Brister fír fer fair*,¹¹² while she persuades others to fight by making them drunk and offering her own daughter to one after the other. In coercing Fer Diad to fight against his own foster-brother, her tactics include threatening him with satire, offering him her daughter (and even herself, in Recension I), and shaming him with lies about Cú Chulainn's boasts. In Recension II, when she covers the retreat of the Connachta, this is brought to an ignominious end as she is forced to stop to menstruate and/or urinate, and is criticised by Fergus for doing so at this crucial moment: *is olc in tráth 7 ní cóir a dénam*.¹¹³ We can therefore observe a contrast between Medb's portrayal in *TBC* and in *TF*. Her central actions in *TF*, leading the army and fighting in the battle, are also some of her central actions in the *Táin*. However, while these actions are presented without comment in *TF* and if anything seem to be viewed positively by the author, who respects her valour and military prowess, in the *Táin* they are invariably given a negative spin, often accompanied by explicit criticisms made by the narrator or another character.¹¹⁴

In addition to this negative presentation of certain of Medb's actions in *TBC*, she also has a wide range of negative personality traits which define her character throughout the text. She is characterised as a 'proud and foolish woman';¹¹⁵ for example, she makes ill-advised and unjust

¹⁰⁹ *TBC-LU*, ll. 4037–9: 'Medb took up her weapons and rushed into battle. Thrice she was victorious until a phalanx of spears turned her back'.

¹¹⁰ *TBC-LL*, ll. 4265–71, 4724–7 and 4821–42.

¹¹¹ *TBC-LU*, ll. 25–6: 'all those who part here today from comrade and friend will curse me for it is I who have mustered this hosting'.

¹¹² *TBC-LU*, l. 1885: 'Let terms of fair play be broken against him'.

¹¹³ *TBC-LL*, l. 4827: 'it is ill-timed and it is not right to do so'. With relation to scenes such as this, Ní Dhonnchadha comments that the message that Medb's failure as a military leader is due to her sex is driven home by constant references to bodily functions, sexual acts and animal parallels ('Gormlaith and her Sisters', p. 168); see also Kelly, 'Táin as Literature', p. 82. For a less negative interpretation of this scene, see Edel, *Inside the Táin*, pp. 292–8.

¹¹⁴ Kelly, 'Táin as Literature', pp. 78–9.

¹¹⁵ *TBC-LU*, l. 3204: among Cethern's injuries, Fíngin identifies Medb's handiwork as *bangal báethúallach* ('wounds inflicted by a proud and foolish woman').

decisions, as in her decision to ignore Fedelm's prophecy or her wish to kill the Gaileóin in case they take all the credit for victory. Her pride also makes her *co mét mbúafaid* (in Fer Diad's words)¹¹⁶ – this in particular seems to prompt the Recension II author to make explicit comments on her behaviour; for example, *conid sí briathar is mó gén 7 tarcaissul ... ócthigern do dénam din chúicedach is dech buí i nHérind .i. di Chonchobur*.¹¹⁷ She is selfish, as may be seen in her statement in Recension II that she values her own desires over the lives of her followers: *ní théit immach ... as diliu lind oldámmít fadessin*.¹¹⁸ She is also especially characterised by her treacherous behaviour; for example, when she breaks the terms of fair play against Cú Chulainn, or in Recension I where she invites Cú Chulainn to a mock peace with the intention of killing him – in this case, Láeg explicitly warns Cú Chulainn: *At móra glonna Medbi*.¹¹⁹ In Recension II, Fer Diad tells Cú Chulainn: *Ní tú acht Medb rar marnestar*.¹²⁰ Meanwhile, in *TF*, these negative characteristics seem to be completely lacking – they are certainly not explicit, and I would argue they are not even implied.

In other words, it is almost universally agreed that Medb receives a negative depiction in *TBC*, especially in the later second recension of the tale found in LL.¹²¹ As a result, we are used to thinking of Medb as a negative character, and not only one who is criticised for herself but one through whom all of womankind is criticised, making her a classic example of the negative attitude towards women which medieval Irish authors are often thought to have held. There are numerous examples from the *Táin* which explicitly use Medb's actions and characteristics as an opportunity to generalise on the failings of womankind, taking Medb as representative of women in general. For example, when Medb expresses her desire to kill the Gaileóin, in Recension I Ailill says that this is typical of *banchomairle*.¹²² Most famously, at the end of both recensions, Fergus uses the metaphor of a herd of horses led by a mare to express his explanation for the failure of the expedition – in the words of Recension I: *Is básad do cach graig remitét láir, rotgata, rotbrata, rotfeither a moín hì tóin mná misrairleastair*.¹²³ In these examples, we may therefore see that the author(s) of the *Táin* considered women to have poor judgement, to give bad advice and to be incapable of leadership which is viewed as a 'male' function. *TBC* also contains a number of other female characters whose behaviour receives criticism, such as the malign presence of the Morrígan (who *baí oc indloch 7 oc etarchossaít eterna dá dúnad chechtarda*) or

¹¹⁶ *TBC-LL*, l. 2685: 'great in boastfulness'.

¹¹⁷ *TBC-LL*, ll. 1394–7: 'that is the most scornful and insulting speech ... to call Conchobor, the finest king of a province in Ireland, a petty lord'.

¹¹⁸ *TBC-LL*, ll. 180–1: 'none goes forth ... who is any dearer to us than we ourselves'.

¹¹⁹ *TBC-LU*, l. 1932: 'Many are Medb's treacherous deeds'.

¹²⁰ *TBC-LL*, l. 3216: 'Not you but Medb betrayed us'.

¹²¹ As noted by scholars such as de Paor ('Common Authorship', pp. 126–8), O'Rahilly (*Táin Bó Cúalnge from the Book of Leinster*, pp. liii–lv), Dooley ('Invention of Women', p. 126) and Greenwood ('Some Aspects of the Evolution', pp. 53–4). For a less negative reassessment of Medb's depiction in *TBC*, see Edel, *Inside the Táin*, pp. 207–302.

¹²² *TBC-LU*, l. 163: 'a woman's counsel'.

¹²³ *TBC-LU*, ll. 4123–4: 'That is what usually happens to a herd of horses led by a mare. Their substance is taken and carried off and guarded as they follow a woman who has misled them'.

the inconstant attentions of Finnabair (as Cú Chulainn says to Fer Diad in Recension II: *sochaide 'ma tart bréic 7 do loitt do lethéit*).¹²⁴

Certainly the *Táin* is not alone in conveying a negative attitude towards women, as has been discussed in the Introduction above.¹²⁵ As in *TBC*, there are other texts in which women are criticised explicitly, as in *Tecosca Cormaic* or *Aided Chon Roí*, where Cú Rói is killed through the actions of his treacherous wife Bláthnat who then dies a violent death as a result (the tale ends with a quatrain criticising her, even though Cú Chulainn was arguably equally responsible).¹²⁶ However, in many tales, this overt criticism is absent, and this makes it problematic to assert a generalising argument that the medieval Irish invariably viewed women negatively. This brings us back to the depiction of Medb in *TF*. As has been seen, of all the female figures in medieval Irish literature, she is perhaps the one we are most strongly programmed to expect to view as a negative character. Added to that, we are also accustomed, from the perspective of much of the scholarship and from the strongly negative message of at least some texts, to expect to find a negative attitude towards women in general in medieval Irish texts. This then is the paradigm that we bring with us when we start attempting to interpret Medb's role in *TF*.

However, the depiction of Medb in *TF* does not fit this paradigm, suggesting that such a paradigm may in fact be wrong – or if not completely wrong, at least too inflexible and generalised. The most logical conclusion is that the reason why we can find no criticism of Medb in *TF* is because this author did not intend to portray her negatively. Arguably, *TBC* has for too long shaped our understanding of the character of Medb, meaning that she is frequently characterised in such terms as 'an unscrupulous and masterful virago who dominates her husband';¹²⁷ 'warrior queen ... aggressively sexual';¹²⁸ 'a masterful woman ... with unconcealed leanings towards a multiplicity of husbands and paramours'.¹²⁹ Such a characterisation ignores the variation and multiplicity of her depictions in a range of different tales. While elements of her portrayal remain the same across many tales – for example, the fact that she 'wears the trousers' in her marriage is a recurring trope – authors' judgements of her do vary. Charles-Edwards, in his analysis of *SMMD*, draws attention to the parallels between this tale and *Fled Bricrend*: both Ailill and Mac Dathó are faced with a dilemma and respond in a similar manner (*co-rrabe tri thráth cen dig cen biad, acht 'co immorchor ón taib co araile*;¹³⁰ *nírchotail oculus ní roloing co cend tri lá oculus teóra n-aidche*);¹³¹ and their wives give them similar advice, namely that they should

¹²⁴ *TBC-LL*, l. 4601: 'sowed strife and dissension between the two encampments on either side'; ll. 3043–4: 'she played many men false, she destroyed such as you'.

¹²⁵ See p. 165.

¹²⁶ *Aided Chon Roí* (ed. Best, §15).

¹²⁷ Mac Cana, 'Women in Irish Mythology', p. 9.

¹²⁸ Ford, 'Celtic Women', p. 424.

¹²⁹ O'Rahilly, 'On the Origin', pp. 15–16.

¹³⁰ *SMMD*, §3; my transl.: '[Mac Dathó] was three full days without food or drink, but at night he turned from one side to the other'.

¹³¹ *Fled Bricrend* (ed. and transl. Henderson, §58): 'he neither ate nor slept till the end of three days and three nights'.

promise the contested item (the dog, the *curadmír*) to all interested parties unbeknownst to each.¹³² Although Medb acts in her characteristic manner, dominating Ailill and taking decisions herself (she tells him: *Is midlachda no táí. Mani brethaige-seo, brethaigfet-sa*),¹³³ Charles-Edwards points out that, in the context of *Fled Bricrend*, she does not appear to be criticised. Rather, ‘Medb’s plan appears both ingenious and honourable’, since she gives the three warriors gifts which definitively identify Cú Chulainn as pre-eminent, but in a manner such that this will only come to light once they have left Connacht, thereby protecting Connacht while providing the Ulaid with the judgement they requested.¹³⁴ Medb’s plan does have greater subtlety than that of Mac Dathó’s wife (which indeed has often been criticised as straightforwardly negative),¹³⁵ but Charles-Edwards nevertheless uses this parallel to emphasise that we cannot simply blame Mac Dathó’s wife on the basis of the assumption that the medieval Irish thought any plan by a woman would be doomed to failure.¹³⁶ We must also take account of texts where it is Ailill, rather than Medb, who is depicted as the villain of the piece. For example, in *TBF*, Ailill is portrayed most negatively; he says of Fráech: *Aní is maith, fúaiprem inna degaid 7 marbam fo chétóir resú forruma bine forn*, but Medb replies: *Is líach ón 7 is meth n-einich dúnn*.¹³⁷ Indeed, her attitude towards Fráech is almost maternal, which provides a parallel with *TF* where her role as a fiercely loving mother is a key aspect of her characterisation (even though from *TBC* we are used to thinking of her as a bad mother due to her treatment of Finnbair).¹³⁸

There are therefore other examples besides *TF* in which Medb, while retaining much of her strong-willed personality, does not receive criticism, in spite of the supposedly influential nature of *TBC*. This non-critical portrayal of Medb in *TF* is perhaps of even greater significance, then, since this tale does actually seem to have been directly influenced by *TBC*, possibly by the LL-version in particular.¹³⁹ The *TF*-author seems to have adopted Medb’s characteristic behaviour from the *Táin*, namely her dominant leadership and military skills. However, he has not felt the need to transfer across the critical commentary and attitude which accompanied this behaviour in *TBC*. This possibility that medieval Irish authors could be selective in their use of material drawn from other sources should be

¹³² Mac Dathó’s wife says: *Tabair dóib-sium dib línaib, cumma cíá-thóetsat imbi* (*SMMD*, §3; my transl.: ‘Give [it] to them both, it does not matter which of them falls because of it’).

¹³³ *Fled Bricrend* (ed. and transl. Henderson, §58): ‘Coward! If you do not decide, I will’.

¹³⁴ Charles-Edwards, ‘Historical Context’, p. 15.

¹³⁵ See, for example, McCone’s comments on her ‘Machiavellian advice’ (*Pagan Past*, p. 77); Bitel, *Land of Women*, p. 38.

¹³⁶ In fact, Toner concludes that the message of *SMMD* is that ‘the wife’s advice is essentially sound and provides immediate relief to Mac Dathó’ (‘Wise Women’, p. 269); this view is also held by Edel (*Inside the Táin*, p. 225).

¹³⁷ *TBF*, ll. 173–5; my transl.: ‘It would be best that we set upon him and kill him immediately, before he inflicts destruction on us’; ‘That is pitiful and a loss of honour for us’.

¹³⁸ Alongside this recognition of Medb’s varied portrayals must also come a reconsideration of our stereotype of Ailill, since the traditional view is that he is the passive, ‘hen-pecked’ husband, yet I have given examples where he is the more villainous of the two, while there are other tales where he is the more active, such as *Aislinge Óengusso* (ed. Shaw, §§10–12).

¹³⁹ See my observation that Medb’s role as a female warrior seems to be limited to *TF* and *TBC* (p. 181), and ‘Textual Notes’, n. to l. 618, where I argue that the *ferchutredaig* in *TF* must have been derived from *TBC-LL*.

more frequently emphasised, particularly with reference to the medieval Irish use of patristic or Continental Christian sources discussed in the Introduction.¹⁴⁰

Ferb

Perhaps the most interesting development which occurs as we move into the second half of *TF* is the transformation in the character of Ferb. As we have seen, in the first half of the tale, she barely features, in spite of notionally being the reason for Maine's presence in Dúnad Geirg. In the second half, however, she comes to dominate the narrative in a manner that is extremely rare for a female character in medieval Irish literature. Aside from the scenes involving Medb (her vision in §9 and her battle in §16), which bookend the second half, the intervening scenes (§§11–15) are completely focused on Ferb. Not only this, but they are almost entirely taken up with *speech* by Ferb. Much of this speech takes the form of laments: she utters two laments for Maine and one for all the Connacht warriors. As stated above, lamenting may be interpreted from the perspective of speech-act theory as taking an action in response to one's situation, but nevertheless seems to be a role associated with powerlessness (and often with women) and arguably one that can denote a passive character.¹⁴¹ However, Ferb's laments differ from Nuagel's, in the first place simply in terms of number, since she performs three laments, one of which (her first lament for Maine) is extremely long, by far the longest poem in the text. These laments therefore give Ferb a stronger presence in the tale than Nuagel and indeed shape the whole tone of the second half.

Moreover, lamenting is not the only role which she performs in the second half, since her laments are interspersed with dialogue-poems in which she converses with Maine's two foster-brothers, Fíannamail and Domnall. In these encounters, she seems to have assumed her father's role as the leader of Dúnad Geirg, since it is she who goes out to meet and converse with the new arrivals. For example, when Fíannamail arrives, we are told: *Ro tūarascaib ind echlach dī-si, & ro innis scéla garba dó-som. Ro dassied immi-sium iā sin, 7 ro iārair eōlas airm i faigbed Chonchobar*, which Ferb conveys to him in an ensuing dialogue.¹⁴² It is also noteworthy that, in her account of the battle, Ferb seems to align herself with the warriors defending the fort, as if she were one of them: *Ulaid tāncatar atúaid ... coro gabsat fōraind tech*.¹⁴³ As a result of these dialogues, Maine's foster-brothers set out to seek revenge for Maine. In her dialogue with Fíannamail, it is mostly just the information conveyed by Ferb that leads Fíannamail into taking action: the discovery that Maine is dead and that it was Conchobar who

¹⁴⁰ See pp. 164–5. For example, Harrington argues that 'the Irish were indeed citers of patristic orthodoxy at times, but selectively: as a rule they quote the exhortations which are positive and affirming of the nun rather than those restrictive ones demanding her enclosure' (*Women in a Celtic Church*, p. 137); see also Oxenham's example on p. 196.

¹⁴¹ See pp. 169–70.

¹⁴² *TF*, ll. 415–17: 'The messenger [the female messenger from Dúnad Geirg] made [his arrival] known to her, and she [Ferb] told [the] bitter tidings to him. Then he was enraged, and he asked for knowledge of where he would find Conchobar'.

¹⁴³ *TF*, ll. 450–2: 'It was the Ulaid who came from the north ... and they took the house in spite of us'.

killed him. Meanwhile, in the case of Domnall, Ferb more explicitly ‘incites’ him to vengeance: *do-dechaid immach ina agid, 7 ro gress co mór*.¹⁴⁴ She exhorts and shames him into action, pointing out that if Domnall had been killed *ropad bladach a dīgail* and asserting:

*Nī hopair lēch na ndéni,
uchfad ‘uch’ is ēcaíni;
ōr na targa Mani de,
ba ferr calma fri nāmte*.¹⁴⁵

Women also perform the role of incitement in other medieval Irish tales,¹⁴⁶ such as *TBC*, where Medb and the other Connacht women incite a range of men to face Cú Chulainn.¹⁴⁷ Cú Chulainn’s wife Emer repeatedly undertakes this role: for example, in *Serglige Con Culainn* she upbraids the Ulaid for failing to assist Cú Chulainn in his sickness and Cú Chulainn himself for failing to recover (*is mebul duit laigi fri bangrád*);¹⁴⁸ and in *Tochmarc Emire* she spurs him on to greater achievements by questioning his initial boasts: *At maithi na comrama móethmacáim acht nád ránac co nert n-erred béos*.¹⁴⁹ In spite of these examples, again it should be noted that this is not a specifically female role,¹⁵⁰ since male characters also incite heroes: indeed, Mac Cana has noted that in the extant texts the role of inciter is most commonly assigned to the hero’s charioteer,¹⁵¹ as exemplified by Láeg during Cú Chulainn’s fight against Fer Diad in *TBC* – in fact, Cú Chulainn specifically requests Láeg: *mad fórum-sa bus róen indiu, ara nderna-su mo grísad 7 mo glámad 7 olc do ráda rim gorop móite éir m’fír 7 m’fèrgg fóromm*.¹⁵² These incitements (by male and female characters) invariably provoke a response and Ferb’s are no exception, since in response to her dialogues with them, Fiannamail and Domnall then seek revenge for Maine. Therefore, by undertaking this role of inciter, Ferb directly influences the action of the story.

Ferb’s laments, meanwhile, cannot be considered separately to her dialogues (as passive vs active); rather, they must be viewed as a continuum with them. As has been said of Old Norse laments by women, ‘whetting [inciting] and lamenting are two sides of the same coin’, and the same arguably

¹⁴⁴ *TF*, l. 525: ‘she came out to meet him, and she incited [him] greatly’; see Mac Cana, ‘*Laíded*’, pp. 75–80, for discussion of this verb *gressaid*.

¹⁴⁵ *TF*, ll. 553 and 535–8: ‘his [Maine’s] revenge would be renowned’; ‘It is not the deed of warriors that you do, / sighing ‘uch’ and lamenting; / since Maine will not return as a result of it, / deeds of valour against enemies would be better’.

¹⁴⁶ Mac Cana, ‘*Laíded*’, p. 87; O’Leary, ‘Honour of Women’, pp. 29–31.

¹⁴⁷ One example is the incitement of Lóich, where we may note the recurrence of the same verb *gressaid*: first the women of Connacht are *oc gressacht Lóich* (‘inciting Lóich’) and then *gabais Medb for gressacht Lóich* (‘Medb began inciting Lóich’) (*TBC-LU*, ll. 1908 and 1969–70; my transl.).

¹⁴⁸ *Serglige Con Culainn* (ed. Dillon, §§29 and 30; my transl.): ‘it is a shameful thing for you to be laid low for love of a woman’.

¹⁴⁹ *Tochmarc Emire* (ed. van Hamel, §21; my transl.): ‘Those are good triumphs for a tender youth, but you have not yet attained the strength of a champion’.

¹⁵⁰ This contrasts with Old Norse literature, where the ‘whetting woman’ is a specific role for female characters to perform; see Jochens, ‘Female Inciter’.

¹⁵¹ Mac Cana, ‘*Laíded*’, p. 87.

¹⁵² *TBC-LL*, ll. 3271–3: ‘if it be I who am defeated this day, you must incite me and revile me and speak evil of me so that my ire and anger shall rise the higher thereby’.

applies in Ferb's case.¹⁵³ Not only does she take the action of expressing her grief and commenting on her situation in private, she also channels this same grief into inciting men to take revenge in a way that she cannot, through battle. She tells Domnall:

*Ropad sám ram chride caín,
ropad dídnad dom anmain:
dīthnacht Ulad uili ind,
dot láim dremuin, a Domnaill.*¹⁵⁴

This indicates that she is enacting her revenge vicariously through him, using her grief as an active force to attempt to bring about the outcome that she desires.

For this reason, Ferb's laments must be viewed differently to Nuagel's lament. On its own, while not entirely passive, a lament that does not prompt any further events cannot be said to be a hugely active response. However, a lament that is combined with incitement in order to influence future action is vastly more powerful. Ferb herself recognises that lament without additional action seems largely futile. In her lament for the Connachta, she states: *Is trúag mo chumañg-sa rib / ic scailiud dér is ic mifrig.*¹⁵⁵ This seems to imply an admission by Ferb that to be *ic scailiud dér is ic mifrig* is of no use to the Connacht warriors, or indeed to anyone else, even though this is the expected role for women to perform. Here she comments on the helplessness which she feels in her own situation, as she also does in her first lament for Maine: *Noco chumcim-sea ní duit.*¹⁵⁶ She makes a similar comment on the futility of lament in her incitement of Domnall, where she criticises him for indulging in 'pointless' lamenting when he could be taking action, in the stanza already cited:

*Nī hopair lēch na ndéni,
uchfad 'uch' is ēcaíni;
ōr na targa Mani de,
ba ferr calma fri nānte.*

However, Ferb not only acknowledges her position of helplessness but also militates against it, attempting to transcend the largely passive role of mourner and doing everything in her power to enact (or at least cause to be enacted) the revenge for her beloved that she wishes to see.

This must surely influence how we interpret her death in §16 at the end of the tale. After Medb's defeat by Conchobar, Ferb reappears along with her mother and the other women of the fort as a 'spoil of war', listed after the treasures which Conchobar takes from the fort: *Do-rat dano leis in rígain .i. Nuagil ingin Ergi, 7 a hingin .i. Feirb, 7 na trī coícait ingen immalle fria.* We are told that Ferb and the other women all die from grief for the men's deaths: *At-bath fo chétōir Ferb 7 a trí coícait ingen immalle*

¹⁵³ Clover, 'Hildigunnr's Lament', p. 27.

¹⁵⁴ *TF*, ll. 559–62: 'It would be comfort for my good heart, / it would be consolation for my soul: / The destruction of all the Ulaid there, / by your furious hand, o Domnall'.

¹⁵⁵ *TF*, ll. 502–3: 'My ability on your behalf is wretched (i.e. I am not able to do anything for you), / weeping and mourning'.

¹⁵⁶ *TF*, l. 411: 'I can do nothing for you'.

*fria do chumaid na macraide; at-bath dano Nuagel do chumaid a fir 7 a dā mac.*¹⁵⁷ O’Leary has suggested that, although the ostensible reason for the women’s death is grief at the death of their loved ones, ‘in light of their predicament as prisoners, shame seems a more plausible cause for their demise’.¹⁵⁸ There are a number of other instances in Irish literature of women who die of shame, including as a result of abduction, as in the case of Aillenn in the Prose *Dindshenchas* who is abducted by Crem Marda and we are told: *ad-bath Aillenn ar naire*.¹⁵⁹ However, I would dispute O’Leary’s interpretation of the women’s deaths in *TF*, if only because this is not the reason given by the author: if the cause of their deaths was shame, then why would he not tell us so (as the author in the *dindshenchas* example does)? If we simply accept the stated cause of death from grief, then taken on its own, this appears as another typically passive response.

However, I would argue that the stanza from Ferb’s lament for the Connachta already cited provides the key to interpreting her death. The stanza in full is:

*Is trúag mo chumañg-sa rib
ic scailiud dér is ic mifrig,
ropad ferr lim-sa dul lib
is mo loscud do chrithrib.*¹⁶⁰

As in the stanza from her incitement of Domnall cited above, Ferb uses the comparative adjective *ferr* ‘better’ to balance the two halves of the stanza against one another. In the first couplet of each, she expresses her strong criticism of lamenting as a futile, passive response, while the second couplet states the active response that would be preferable (*ferr*). In her incitement of Domnall, she expresses a preference for action, *calma fri nāmtē*, rather than inaction. In her lament, the preferable ‘action’ is to die alongside the Connachta, *dul lib is mo loscud do chrithrib*. Death therefore does not seem to be viewed by Ferb as a wholly passive response: if lamenting in response to a tragic situation is passive behaviour (as Ferb herself claims), choosing to die in response might be viewed in contrast as an active gesture – and the opposition that is framed between the two halves of the stanza seems to support this interpretation. Thus Ferb’s death at the end of the tale may be viewed, not as a passive event, but rather as an active rejection of the only other alternative, which is to live on, alone, lamenting and powerless. As Ingridsdotter says, in the case of deaths from emotion, ‘death is used as the ultimate superlative’.¹⁶¹

In this respect, Ferb may be compared to other women in medieval Irish literature, who likewise seem to explicitly ‘choose’ death as an act of defiance. For example, at the end of *LMU*, when

¹⁵⁷ *TF*, ll. 627–9: ‘Then he brought with him the queen, namely Nuagel daughter of Erg, and her daughter, namely Ferb, and the one hundred and fifty maidens together with her’; ‘Ferb died immediately, and her one hundred and fifty maidens together with her, from grief for the youths; Nuagel died moreover from grief for her husband and her two sons’.

¹⁵⁸ O’Leary, ‘Honour of Women’, p. 42.

¹⁵⁹ *Aillenn* (ed. and transl. Stokes, pp. 309–10): ‘Aillenn died of shame’; see Ingridsdotter, ‘Death from Emotion’, p. 89.

¹⁶⁰ *TF*, ll. 502–5: ‘My ability on your behalf is wretched (i.e. I am not able to do anything for you), / weeping and mourning, / I would prefer to go with you / and be burnt by flames’.

¹⁶¹ Ingridsdotter, ‘Death from Emotion’, p. 91.

Conchobar threatens to send Derdriu to Eogan, Noísiu's murderer, and mocks her about it, *do-lléici a cenn immon cloich co-nderna brúrig dia cinn co-mbo marb*.¹⁶² As Herbert says, 'her final act is a considered one ... Deirdre breaks free by the only direct route open to her, by taking her own life'.¹⁶³ O'Leary would classify this as another shame-induced death;¹⁶⁴ however, I prefer to focus on the 'choice'-element in Derdriu's death, reading it as an act of rebellion against Conchobar's cruel dictates. Although Ferb's death in *TF* is not presented as a suicide, Derdriu's use of her death as a way of taking action against Conchobar underlines the presentation of death as action (contrasted with mourning as inaction) which seems to run through Ferb's views on the matter. A further example is the death of Buan, in *Talland Étair*, who is ordered into a chariot by her husband's murderer Conall but requests that he wait until she has lamented: *at-recht iarum a faid guil eissi ... 7 fos-ceird dara cenn os-sí marb*.¹⁶⁵ In each case, the woman's beloved is killed and, when the perpetrator turns his cruelty towards her, she first expresses her situation in lament and then dies, thereby denying the perpetrator the satisfaction he seeks. Thus these women not only die from grief for the death of their beloved, but also, by dying, take a final action against the one responsible.

As argued above, although lament on its own is not wholly passive, it is still arguably passive to some extent if, as in the case of Nuagel, it produces no further results. However, Ferb's laments, and the extent of her grief, dominate the second half of the tale in a way that is impossible to ignore, either by the audience, or by the warriors whom she incites to fight on her behalf. In the character of Ferb, then, we see a woman acting to challenge her sense of powerlessness, seeking ways in which she can direct her grief into more proactive channels. In this way, what we may be observing over the course of the tale is a redefining of the act of lamenting, even a heroicising of it, showing how it can be combined with other actions such as incitement to transform a woman's words into her weapons. Over the course of the narrative, we come to see that Ferb is more than she initially appears. She never breaks out from the sphere of expected female behaviour (as the female warriors Medb and Cathach do) – in fact, she seldom breaks out from the role of lamenter – and yet we observe her subtly subverting this often passive role until grief becomes something active, even something heroic. Then, only when she has exhausted all other options does she ultimately die, resisting Conchobar to the last. Although unable to die in battle, we may nevertheless say that she did ultimately get her wish for a heroic death. Although she lamented her lack of *cumang* 'power, ability, strength', one might argue that, over the course of the tale, we can observe Ferb defining what a woman's *cumang* could actually be, if actively exercised.

¹⁶² *LMU* (ed. and transl. Hull, §19): 'she dashed her head against the stone until she made a mass of fragments of her head so that she died'.

¹⁶³ Herbert, 'Celtic Heroine?', p. 19. For a discussion of the nuance and variation found in deaths from violent emotion in medieval Irish literature, see Ingridsdotter, 'Death from Emotion' (p. 94 on suicide).

¹⁶⁴ O'Leary, 'Honour of Women', p. 42.

¹⁶⁵ *Talland Étair* (ed. and transl. Ó Dónaill, ll. 232–3): 'she wailed then ... and she throws herself backwards and she dead'.

A sign of Ferb's significance in the narrative is the amount of space which is dedicated to her speeches – indeed, she is given noticeably more to say than any other character, which is extremely unusual for female characters in medieval Irish literature. In this respect, she is reminiscent of Cú Chulainn's wife Emer, who is also distinguished by the space devoted to her speech, as noted by Findon.¹⁶⁶ In both of these female characters, we see that words are being depicted as a woman's weapons: speech itself can become an act.¹⁶⁷ Lamenting undeniably constitutes a certain sort of speech act, but this is only one of the many which Ferb has at her disposal. While lamenting is often presented as being dominated by emotion not reason, Ferb's speech shows her to be a rational character (if also one capable of experiencing deep emotion). Her laments contain complex imagery and allusion,¹⁶⁸ making her reminiscent of Emer, who displays her control of arcane language in her riddling dialogue with Cú Chulainn in *Tochmarc Emire* and in the *bríatharcath na mban* 'women's war of words' in *Fled Bricrend*.¹⁶⁹ The prominence given to Ferb's speech might also be compared with poems from the medieval Irish canon which are placed into the mouths of female protagonists, such as *Ísucán*, uttered in the voice of St Íte, and 'The Lament of the *Caillech Bérrí*', or indeed with the lyric poetry spoken by Líadain in *Comrac Líadaine 7 Cuirithir*.¹⁷⁰ *Comrac Líadaine 7 Cuirithir* is a particularly important example in the discussion of medieval Irish attitudes towards women, since in this tale the expected pattern of the sexually unstable woman who ruins the man's career is reversed, and Líadain is shown to be the wiser and stronger of the two.¹⁷¹ As Clancy says, 'her poems are the ones that carry weight in this tale, none more so than the last, which is a sensitive exploration of the conflict of human and religious love'.¹⁷² In this way, she is reminiscent of Ferb, whose poems are also the focus of at least the second half of the tale, likewise characterised by their admixture of rationality and heartfelt emotion. Moreover, Ferb is able to take command of Dúnad Geirg, and her exchange with Fíannamail is not particularly emotionally charged – rather, she simply gives plain facts in response to Fíannamail's requests for information. Contrary to expectation, therefore, her laments and her death from grief also take on this rational and proactive character. Without doing anything hugely dramatic, Ferb nevertheless subverts the female stereotype and comes to dominate the narrative.

Significantly, her death receives marked attention from the author, since he narrates: *Ro claided úag do Féirb iar sin, 7 ro tócbad a lía 7 ro scríbad [a] ainm Oguim, 7 do-ringned дума immon licc,*

¹⁶⁶ Findon, *Woman's Words*, p. 25.

¹⁶⁷ See p. 169.

¹⁶⁸ For example, in Poems VII and IX; see nn. to ll. 353–4, 488 and 493.

¹⁶⁹ *Tochmarc Emire* (ed. van Hamel, §§17–27); *Fled Bricrend* (ed. Henderson, §§22–4); see Findon, *Woman's Words*, pp. 40 and 71–7.

¹⁷⁰ *Ísucán* and 'Lament of the *Caillech Bérrí*' (ed. Murphy); *Comrac Líadaine 7 Cuirithir* (ed. Meyer). Clancy discusses the possibility that all three might actually be the work of female poets ('Women Poets', pp. 61–70).

¹⁷¹ This contradicts Bitel's assertion that all medieval Irish texts agree on the connection between women and 'wrongheaded passion', which was a threat to ordered society (*Land of Women*, p. 62).

¹⁷² Clancy, 'Women Poets', p. 70.

*conid Duma Ferbi a ainm ri Ráith Ini aniar-túaid atá.*¹⁷³ In this way, Ferb's name is preserved in a physical landmark, in writing and in a place-name (thereby embedding her in *dindshenchas*), and the use of the present tense in *conid* seeks to suggest that this has endured until the author's own time. Apart from the poem composed by Conchobar's poet, this is the only memorial to the events of the tale which is mentioned, and its focus on Ferb is a final recognition of her centrality to this narrative. Indeed, Ferb's death and burial essentially mark the end of the narrative, with Conchobar's return to Emain Macha forming a coda which prefaces the second version of the tale conveyed in the poet's account.

Overall, in the second half of the tale, Ferb's behaviour never transcends that of the expected female sphere, since lamenting and inciting are both well-attested female activities. However, she is undeniably active in the second half of the tale in a way that she was not in the first half, performing a number of different roles. Even Ferb's death, in light of her behaviour in the preceding passages, may be interpreted as an act of defiance in the face of capture when no other options are left.

Analysis and Conclusions

What conclusions can we draw, then, regarding the attitude towards women displayed by the LL-prose version of *TF*? First, we must ascertain how such attitudes might be identified. Since the text makes no explicit statements that set out its author's attitude towards women, we must consider instead evidence such as the positive or negative consequences of characters' actions or how much attention the author chooses to dedicate to certain characters. This is the norm for medieval Irish literature: as Poppe says, in general, 'events and their outcomes are simply described in these texts, not explicitly commented on on a meta-narrative level', which is why a wide range of interpretations is possible regarding the meaning of a particular tale.¹⁷⁴ It should be more frequently emphasised how unusual *TBC* is in its explicit meta-textual commentary on the behaviour of its female characters, from which it generalises to express a negative attitude towards womankind overall. Similarly, *Tecosca Cormaic* is frequently cited in support of arguments claiming that medieval Irish society held violently negative views about women. However, as Oxenham notes, 'in its virulence towards women, *Tecosca Cormaic* is unique in pre-tenth-century Irish sources': this is only the view of one author which was not necessarily shared by others.¹⁷⁵ In my opinion, the presentation of women in a limited number of sources such as these, which make explicit their negative view of women, has for too long dominated our assessment of the attitude towards women in the medieval Irish period. The attitude of other texts must also be considered, and on their own terms, not in light of the attitude evinced by a small selection of texts. Oxenham notes

¹⁷³ *TF*, ll. 629–30: 'A grave was dug for Ferb after that, and her grave-stone was raised and her name was written in Ogam, and a grave-mound was made around the stone, so that Duma Ferbi ('Ferb's Grave-mound') is its name, which is beside Ráith Ini in the north-west'.

¹⁷⁴ Poppe, 'Scéla Muicce Meic Da Thó Revisited', p. 3.

¹⁷⁵ Oxenham, *Perceptions of Femininity*, p. 43 (also observed by Edel, 'Early Irish Queens', p. 5, n. 21). Oxenham comments additionally that the *Triads of Ireland* condemn the same vices as those attributed to women in *Tecosca Cormaic*, but here they are imputed not only to women but to people in general.

that, while women may have been treated as distinct from men in certain sources, equally not all women were treated alike: ‘femininities are represented as separate from masculinities, but not as a simple, single entity’.¹⁷⁶ For this reason, scholarship must allow room for more nuanced considerations of medieval Irish portrayals of women, instead of seeking some generalised, uniform theory. Even the same behaviour from a woman may be treated differently in different texts, as this chapter’s study of Medb has shown. In a further example, Findon observes that Fand is never overtly condemned in *Serglige Con Culainn*, unlike Sín who performs an arguably similar role in the later text *Aided Muirchertaig meic Erca*, which evinces a more relentlessly negative message about women. As Findon says, ‘through her honest and heartfelt laments Fand implicitly refuses to be dismissed as a wicked adulteress’: her sympathetic portrayal and the remarkable space given to her as a speaking subject militates against such a reading.¹⁷⁷ Toner suggests that this positive portrayal of Fand (at least in Recension A) was deliberately intended to encourage a female audience to identify with her and to promote her choice of maintaining the stability of marriage over giving in to desire.¹⁷⁸

The prominence given to female characters in *TF*, especially in the second half, is surely a crucial piece of evidence for our understanding of this text’s attitude towards women. Both Ferb and Medb dominate the second half of the tale, each active in influencing the narrative in their own way. Certainly, in the first half women are not given such prominent roles and the roles they do undertake are the more traditional (and often more passive) ones we might expect, but even here the number of female characters (seven out of the eight female characters appear in the first half) and the range of roles which they perform is quite remarkable (see Fig. 4).

Fig. 4: The Roles of Female Characters		
FIRST HALF	Ferb	observer
	Otherworldly woman	troublemaker, prophetess
	Nuagel	lamenter
	Mugain	peacemaker, advisor
	Cathach	warrior
	Findchóem	attendant
	female messenger	herald
SECOND HALF	Ferb	lamenter, leader, inciter, spoils of war
	Medb	leader, avenger, warrior
	Otherworldly woman	troublemaker, prophetess
	Nuagel	spoils of war
	female messenger	herald, advisor

¹⁷⁶ Oxenham, *Perceptions of Femininity*, p. 43.

¹⁷⁷ Findon, *Woman’s Words*, p. 132. It should be noted that, according to Toner’s analysis of the two recensions of *Serglige Con Culainn*, the positive portrayal of Fand is a feature of the later Recension A, while Recension B depicts her more negatively (‘Desire and Divorce’, pp. 146 and 157–9).

¹⁷⁸ Toner, ‘Desire and Divorce’, p. 161.

The dominant presence of female characters in the second half of *TF* is one of its most noteworthy features, and this seems to occur partly because most of the male characters have disappeared from the narrative by this point: Ferb takes control of the fort because Gerg, Maine and one of Gerg's sons are dead, while Conchobar and Gerg's other son have separately fled; Medb leads the army in the absence of Ailill, who is almost entirely lacking from the narrative. Therefore, one might argue that it is only through the absence of male characters that female characters are able to gain prominence. At face value, this may seem typical of a 'misogynistic' society, as medieval Irish society is so often presumed to have been. However, I would challenge the usefulness of such a presentation. Medieval Irish society was an undeniably male-dominated society, depicted in its literature by (at least for the most part) male authors;¹⁷⁹ thus, a gender imbalance is only to be expected. It is more interesting to focus on those cases where this imbalance is lessened and female characters are given space to develop, as in *TF*. There are more male than female characters in the tale (twenty as compared to eight), as might be expected (see Fig. 5).

Fig. 5: Female vs Male Characters		
<i>Female characters</i>	<i>Male characters</i>	
Ferb	Maine	Maine's druid
Medb	Conchobar	Cathbad
Otherworldly woman	Gerg	Síabarchend, Fomorian
Nuagel	Fíannamail	Berngal, Fomorian
Mugain	Domnall	Búri, Fomorian
Cathach	Brod, Conchobar's servant	Fácen, Fomorian
Findchóem	Cobthach, Gerg's son	Fabric, Fomorian
female messenger	Conn, Gerg's son	Forais, Fomorian
	Ailill	Níall, Conchobar's son
	Bricriu	Feradach, Conchobar's son

However, if we interrogate these statistics more closely, we can see that, of the four main characters (Ferb, Medb, Maine and Conchobar), half of these are women. Meanwhile, certain other characters should be considered as doublets of one another (such as Gerg's two sons), which decreases the number of fully individualised characters, and increases the proportion of characters who are female (see Fig. 6).

¹⁷⁹ See p. 163, n. 4.

Fig. 6: Female vs Male Characters, showing main characters { ■ } and doublets		
<i>Female characters</i>		<i>Male characters</i>
Ferb		Maine
Medb		Conchobar
Otherworldly woman		Gerg
Nuagel		Fíannamail
Mugain		Domnall
Cathach		Brod
Findchóem / female messenger		Gerg's sons (Cobthach and Conn)
		six Fomorian leaders
		Conchobar's sons (Níall and Feradach)
		Ailill
		Bricriu
		Maine's druid
		Cathbad

Even more interesting results are yielded from a comparison of the *types* of roles performed by the male and female characters. On a basic level, it may be observed that a large number of roles are performed by both genders (see Fig. 7).

Fig. 7: Female Roles vs Male Roles		
<i>Female characters</i>		<i>Male characters</i>
Medb, Ferb	← leader →	Conchobar, Maine, Gerg
Medb, Cathach	← warrior →	most male characters
Medb	← avenger →	Fíannamail, Domnall
Mugain, Otherworldly woman	← advisor →	Cathbad, Maine's druid
Otherworldly woman	← prophesier →	Cathbad, Maine's druid
Otherworldly woman	← troublemaker →	Bricriu
Findchóem	← passive →	Ailill
Ferb, Nuagel	← lamenter	
Ferb	← inciter	
Mugain	← peacemaker	
Ferb, Nuagel	← spoil of war	

Thus there are both male and female rulers and leaders of armies, warriors and avengers, advisors, prophesiers and troublemakers. Some roles, such as lamenter or inciter, are only performed by women

in this tale, although men perform these roles in other medieval Irish tales. Even passivity is not limited to female characters, since Ailill is perhaps the most passive character in the tale. Moreover, the roles performed by women are actually much more varied than those performed by men, since the vast majority of male characters would be defined as warriors, while the female characters are fewer in number but could each be characterised by a different role (see Fig. 8).

Fig. 8: Characters and their Defining Role			
<i>Female characters</i>		<i>Male characters</i>	
Ferb	lamerter, inciter	Maine	warrior, leader
Medb	warrior, leader	Conchobar	warrior, leader
Otherworldly woman	troublemaker, prophetier	Gerg	warrior, leader
Nuagel	lamerter	Fíannamail	warrior
Mugain	peacemaker	Domnall	warrior
Cathach	warrior	Gerg's sons (Cobthach and Conn)	warrior
Findchóem	attendant	six Fomorian leaders	warrior
female messenger	attendant	Conchobar's sons (Níall and Feradach)	warrior
		Brod	attendant
		Bricriu	troublemaker
		Maine's druid	prophetier
		Cathbad	prophetier
		Ailill	non-role

The above analysis highlights the importance of considering the whole picture provided by a text when seeking to assess its views in relation to gender, looking not only at how women are portrayed but also men, and at positive depictions of women alongside negative. The character of Medb in *TBC* is a case in point. Although, as discussed above, Medb and most female characters do receive a negative portrayal in the *Táin*, one should not omit to mention that so do many of the male characters in the text: most characters in fact have a negative aspect to their personality in this text. This point is raised by Sessle, who argues that Medb's negative traits cannot be viewed as solely her fault. Taking as her basis the model of the sovereignty goddess, who selects an appropriate ruler for her kingdom (and is transformed into a hag when such a mate is lacking),¹⁸⁰ Sessle asserts that 'the negative interpretation [of Medb's character] is a direct result of the failures of the men that she interacts with', namely Ailill and Fergus: 'the lack of an appropriate mate transforms Medb into a form of the anti-goddess'.¹⁸¹

¹⁸⁰ McCone, *Pagan Past*, pp. 109–12.

¹⁸¹ Sessle, 'Misogyny and Medb', pp. 137–8. Although the interpretation of *SMMD* has been shown to be a contentious issue, Poppe offers one reading based on Sessle's arguments, suggesting that, just as 'Medb is able to

Although the application of the sovereignty goddess model can bring its own attendant difficulties, Sessle's approach still emphasises the need to consider the fuller picture of a text's portrayal of all its characters, both male and female. Fergus' well-known statement (*Is básad do cach graig remitét láir, rotgata, rotbrata, rotfeither a moín hi tóin mná misrairleastair*),¹⁸² so frequently used to support assertions of *TBC*'s negative view of women, actually reflects poorly on him as well, since he himself is guilty of going *re tóin mná*. Charles-Edwards suggests that such behaviour was viewed as dishonourable, since according to the legal text on *fuidir* 'semi-freeman', *fer in-etet toin a mna tar crich* must reckon his honour-price according to that of his wife (the usual rule was that the wife's honour-price was half that of her husband).¹⁸³ Moreover, despite Sessle's sweeping assertion that, 'although the *Táin* is permeated with female characters, there is not one truly strong and virtuous female throughout the text',¹⁸⁴ it should be remembered that the *Táin* could have been averted if Medb had only listened to a woman's *good* advice, namely, Fedelm's.¹⁸⁵ The importance of looking at the fuller picture presented in a text is also illustrated in an example given by Oxenham. She observes that there are two contiguous episodes in Adomnán's *Vita S. Columbae* which present women's marital power of influence. The first emphasises a wife's dangerous influence in marriage, since the wife advises her husband not to trust the saint's word, resulting in disaster (this woman is compared to Eve); in the second, the virtue of another wife's advice (*saluber consilium*) is emphasised, leading her husband to show mercy to a penitent sinner.¹⁸⁶ Oxenham concludes: 'The influential wife was therefore not necessarily a problem'. More than that, '[the second wife's] good counsel is emphasised far more than the bad counsel of the other wife'; thus, 'Adomnán, while utilising the concept of woman's inheritance of Eve's sinfulness, did not allow it to dominate his representation of women'.¹⁸⁷ Such consideration of the wider context is crucial when attempting to produce an assessment of the medieval Irish attitude towards women. Too often, the temptation is to 'cherry-pick' our sources, homing in on such examples as the first wife which seem to confirm pre-existing assumptions about views of women in the medieval period. In *TF*, then, it is important to consider the portrayal of male characters alongside their female counterparts, in order to fully appreciate our author's attitude towards his female characters.

act in the way she acts because Ailill is a flawed character; he fails as king and ruler, and Medb can therefore appropriate, and misuse, his role', Mac Dathó's indecision and reliance on his wife's advice (negative in this analysis) means that he serves 'as an *exemplum* of the dangers of men's foregoing proper social responsibilities and activities and thereby allowing women to usurp them' – thus he is to be viewed as equally culpable ('*Scéla Muicce Meic Da Thó Revisited*', pp. 6–7).

¹⁸² *TBC-LU*, ll. 4123–4: 'That is what usually happens to a herd of horses led by a mare. Their substance is taken and carried off and guarded as they follow a woman who has misled them'.

¹⁸³ *Fuidir* (ed. Thurneysen, §4; my transl.): 'a man who follows the buttocks of his wife over a border'; Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, pp. 103–4.

¹⁸⁴ Sessle, 'Misogyny and Medb', p. 136.

¹⁸⁵ See Toner's comments on independently-minded women who give beneficial advice (p. 167) and my discussion of Mugain in *TF* (p. 171).

¹⁸⁶ *Vita S. Columbae* (ed. Anderson and Anderson, §§II.37 and II.39).

¹⁸⁷ Oxenham, *Perceptions of Femininity*, pp. 121 and 160.

A final element to be analysed in this regard is the role of speech in the tale, and the proportion of space which is dedicated to male and female speech respectively. This prosimetric narrative is interspersed with eleven poems conveying characters' dialogues and monologues. Aside from some short prophecies given by male druids at the start of the tale, the poems are dominated by female voices. Nuagel utters a lament for her husband Gerg, the Otherworldly woman and Medb perform a poetic dialogue, and Ferb participates in no fewer than five poems: three laments and two dialogues, an incredible 200 lines of verse (see Fig. 9).

Fig. 9: Speakers in the Poems (with female speakers highlighted)		
<i>Poem type</i>	<i>Speaker(s)</i>	<i>Number of lines</i>
I. Ollgáeth's first prophecy	male	20
II. Cathbad and Conchobar's dialogue	male x2	20
III. Imrind's prophecy	male	12
IV. Ollgáeth's second prophecy	male	13
V. Nuagel's lament for Gerg	female	40
VI. Otherworldly woman and Medb's dialogue	female x2	28
VII. Ferb's first lament for Maine	female	76
VIII. Ferb and Fíannamail's dialogue	female, male	32, 28
IX. Ferb's lament for the Connachta	female	36
X. Ferb and Domnall's dialogue	female, male	20, 16
XI. Ferb's second lament for Maine	female	36

The strong presence of female speech in this text (especially in the second half) means that the words of female characters influence how the audience views both the events of the text and the female characters themselves. A comparison might be drawn with the final scene of *Serglige Con Culainn*, in which female discourse is similarly given prominence.¹⁸⁸ As Findon says, Emer and Fand are 'speaking subjects discussing the world from their own viewpoints', and the same might be said of the women in *TF*, especially Ferb.¹⁸⁹ Since most of their speech relates to the deaths of Maine, Gerg and other warriors, their attitudes towards this form the main viewpoints conveyed, predominantly grief, but also anger, blame and desire for vengeance. The women's speech thereby serves to heighten the sense of tragedy, as well as expressing the women's positions within this tragedy. Ferb's perspective is conveyed most extensively, and it is significant that, like Emer, 'the only descriptions [of her] we find are those

¹⁸⁸ *Serglige Con Culainn* (ed. Dillon, §§39–45); see Findon, *Woman's Words*, pp. 124–31; Toner, 'Desire and Divorce', pp. 154–7 and 160.

¹⁸⁹ Findon, *Woman's Words*, p. 129.

in which she describes *herself*, in relation to her feelings and inner state, meaning that our sense of Ferb's character is almost entirely shaped by Ferb herself.¹⁹⁰

In conclusion, it has been seen that the depiction of female characters in the LL-prose version of *TF* challenges our assumptions about how the medieval Irish viewed women and incorporated female characters into their texts. The sheer number of female characters makes this text unusual, and even more so for the fact that two out of the four main characters are female and given at least equal prominence in the narrative to their male equivalents. Furthermore, the space dedicated to Ferb's speech in the second half of the tale means that it is her viewpoint which colours our whole sense of the narrative. In addition to the two main female protagonists, *TF* presents us with a broad range of other female characters, performing widely varying roles (ranging from mourner, to inciter, to warrior, to leader, to troublemaker, to advisor), some of which are passive and some active, with either positive or negative results. It does not, therefore, seek to limit the sorts of roles which female characters might play – indeed, the female roles are arguably more varied than the male roles in this tale. The range of different roles shows that this author had no fixed idea or agenda regarding how women do or should behave, nor a particular message to convey about women, either praising or condemning them. Some roles are those which we would tend to associate with female characters in medieval Irish literature, but others push the boundaries of these traditional models. Note that this should not necessarily lead us to conclude that the portrayal of women in this text represents a social reality, but even to allow women such variety within a fictional world is striking.

The portrayal of two characters in particular is worthy of our especial attention, indeed is arguably paradigm-shifting. Firstly, the character of Ferb requires us to rewrite Ní Bhrolcháin's polarised paradigm of passive = positive / active = negative. Ferb, like Emer, never subverts the sphere of expected female behaviour and yet comes to dominate the narrative, channelling her grief into an active force, and nevertheless receiving no criticism for her active behaviour. She shows us a new model, a woman who can be active and yet a positive force, resisting her position of powerlessness and turning her words into her weapons. Furthermore, as well as re-evaluating our understanding of the behaviour of women who do limit themselves to 'normal' female roles and behaviours, Ní Bhrolcháin's 'troublesome women' also need some further attention. Medb in *TF* shows us that even women who break out from this traditional sphere did not necessarily always receive criticism. Almost invariably, scholars assume that Medb's tendency towards independent action makes her a negative character in the eyes of medieval Irish authors, whatever their views of other female characters.¹⁹¹ However, in *TF*, Medb is portrayed as a clearly dominant female character, who transcends the normal spheres of female behaviour in her roles as warrior and leader, yet who receives no criticism for this behaviour. *TF*

¹⁹⁰ Findon, *Woman's Words*, pp. 48–9.

¹⁹¹ For example, see Findon's comments: 'for Medb, as for other women, an active role proves to be a double-edged sword. The power to act is offset by the ultimate censure of her actions ... unlike the aggressive Medb, [Emer] is not censured for her forthright speech and behaviour' (*Woman's Words*, pp. 6 and 21).

therefore offers important, but until now overlooked, evidence that the medieval Irish may not have held such a universally negative attitude towards strong, active women as has sometimes been suggested.

The almost unique advantage which *TF* offers to the scholar is the range of female characters contained within this single text. Rather than having to look across several texts to find women performing a variety of roles, here such women can be observed side by side. Studies that seek to address our understanding of the medieval Irish attitude towards women tend to focus on a single female character within a tale (whether negative or positive) – Emer, Medb, Derdriu, Mac Dathó's wife, the woman in *Echtrae Chonnlai*, Rónán's wife – because usually this is all that a tale offers in terms of a female presence. However, in this text, we have a range of different female presences, indicating that we are not only dealing with different texts presenting different views about women, but even one text which seems not to display any single attitude towards them. From his inclusion of such a large, varied and prominent female cast, we can conclude that the author of the LL-prose version of *TF* had an unusual interest in female characters and was willing to give them dominant roles in his story. Most importantly, we should remember that this surprisingly large number of female characters should not be taken as an indicator that the text's main message related to gender – the interest and agenda underlying it may have concerned something else completely. We cannot assert that everyone in medieval Ireland viewed women in the same way. Our only access to their attitudes is through a variety of written sources belonging to different genres and written for different purposes, which will naturally convey different perceptions or constructions of female behaviour. For this reason, close reading of individual texts taken on their own terms is essential if we are to gain a fuller understanding of medieval Irish attitudes towards women, and texts such as *TF* can provide crucial evidence for this process.

EPILOGUE

This study of the LL-prose version of *Tochmarc Ferbe* has uncovered many important aspects of the text previously unnoticed by scholars, in addition to suggesting resolutions and explanations for many of its textual difficulties. As well as being a fascinating text in and of itself, this version of *TF* is equally important for the contributions it can make to some of the central facets of our understanding of medieval Irish literature. One of these is intertextuality, an appreciation that the medieval Irish *literati* conceived of their texts as forming an interconnected network of material, into which they sought to insert their own compositions and reworkings. Thus it has been shown that *TF* was embedded in the Ulster Cycle of tales not only through its status as a *remscél* to *TBC* but also through its affinities with texts such as *Tochmarc Emire* and through the presence of the *Ól nGúala*. Textual borrowing has been shown to have played a pervasive role throughout the LL-prose version, and the correspondences with medieval Irish classical adaptations are particularly noteworthy, with ramifications for our understanding of how these adaptations became incorporated into the medieval Irish literary canon. The other crucial feature of the LL-prose version is its portrayal of its female characters, and the paradigm-shifting implications this holds for our understanding of medieval Irish attitudes towards women.

As I have already commented, this edition and analysis of the LL-prose version must be viewed as a preliminary to also editing and analysing the LL-poem and the Eg-prose, in order to gain a clearer understanding of the relationship between these three versions. This can then lead to further investigation into the methods and motives behind the composition and redaction of these separate versions. For example, the issue of gender could be taken further, since the role of women is greatly enhanced in the long version as opposed to the short version, and a comparison between the two versions may illuminate the reasons underlying this. There are also other medieval Irish texts which might be studied to further illuminate *TF*'s textual tradition. Several other tales also survive in both a prose and a verse form.¹ In the case of *Esnada Tige Buchet* and *Immram Curaig Maíle Dúin*, the prose seems to be the earlier form of the tale (possibly ninth-century for both texts), while the verse is evidently later than the prose and a paraphrase of it.² However, in other cases the extant metrical form appears to be older than the prose version; for example, in the case of *Immram Snédgusa 7 Maic Riagla*, the prose seems to be an abstract of the verse.³ *CRR* might also provide a fruitful comparison with *TF*, since both texts are attested in versions in LL and in later manuscripts. Mac Gearailt has argued that the LL-version of *CRR* represents a new composition, reworking an earlier tale which is more closely reflected in the later surviving version.⁴ This appears strikingly similar to the situation that may well have existed in the textual development of *TF*.⁵ I therefore envision a future project which combines these various avenues of further research into a study which considers what *Tochmarc Ferbe* can tell us about methods of narrative composition in medieval Ireland, in their broader social and political contexts.

¹ Mac Cana, 'Prosimetrum', p. 103.

² Greene, '*Esnada Tige Buchet*', p. 27; van Hamel, *Immrama*, p. 24; Oskamp, *Voyage of Máel Dúin*, pp. 93–5.

³ van Hamel, *Immrama*, pp. 78–80.

⁴ Mac Gearailt, '*Cath Ruís na Ríg*', p. 149; 'Language of Some Late Middle Irish Texts', p. 192; 'Change and Innovation', pp. 451–3.

⁵ Note that *TF* and *CRR* also both have close affinities with *TBC-LL* (see Mac Gearailt, 'Language of Some Late Middle Irish Texts', pp. 192–9).

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APPENDIX 1

Corrigenda to Bergin, Best and O'Brien's Diplomatic Edition

I list here the errors found in Bergin, Best and O'Brien's diplomatic edition (line numbers refer to Diplom.):

- l. 33471, Diplom. omits the 7 between *curad* and *cathmiled*
- l. 33483, Diplom. has an additional *punctus* between *dóib* and *.l.*
- l. 33488, Diplom. omits *t* between *cetamain* and *fri*
- l. 33495, Diplom. has *uaas* for *uasa*
- l. 33505, Diplom. has *eram* for *fëram*
- l. 33652, Diplom. has *buí* for *boí*
- l. 33665, Diplom. has *tosaid* for *tosaig*
- l. 33670, Diplom. has *Greg* for *Gerg*
- l. 33786, Diplom. omits *cét* after *secht*
- l. 33794, Diplom. has *maethráth* for *maeth tráth*
- l. 33801, Diplom. has *di* for *de*
- l. 33812, Diplom. has *Borbriathrach* for *Borbbriathrach*
- l. 33821, Diplom. has *foirithin* for *forithin*
- l. 33857, Diplom. has *ropot* for *ropat*
- l. 33904, Diplom. omits this line-end mark *.'* after *sluaig*
- l. 33913, Diplom. has *dassed* for *dassied*
- l. 33976, Diplom. has *agaid* for *agid*
- l. 33991, Diplom. has *dílge* for *dígle*
- l. 34062, Diplom. has *dremain* for *dremuin*
- l. 34200, Diplom. has *gebatsu* for *gebatsa*

Since several of the relevant pages of LL are faded and/or stained, I have consulted Atkinson's facsimile alongside the physical manuscript, in case any readings were clearer when Facs. was produced. Length marks in particular can be difficult to distinguish. If there is variation between my reading, Diplom. and Facs., I have gone with the reading found in two out of three. Below is a list of the places where Diplom. diverges from Atkinson's and my readings:

- l. 33456, *dib* – I read as *díb*
- l. 33461, *Srein* – I read as *Sréin*
- l. 33463, *Belgi oir* – I read as *óir*
- l. 33467, *snáthib* – I read as *snathib* (there is a ligature between the *a* and the lenition mark over the *t*, but I cannot see a length mark)

1. 33476, *Dá chaindill* – I read as *Da* (there is a ligature between the *a* and the lenition mark over the *c*, but I cannot see a length mark)
1. 33477, *cech fîr díb* – I read as *dib*
1. 33483, *oir* – I read as *óir*
1. 33483, *trúallib* – I read as *truallib*
1. 33485, *e* – I read as *é*
1. 33490, *Sect* – I read as *Secht*
1. 33495, *foraib* – I read a *punctus* after *foraib*
1. 33508, *frithálim* – I read as *frithalim*
1. 33511, *chían* – I read as *chian*
1. 33519, *óclach* – I read as *óclách*
1. 33535, *sé* – I read as *se*
1. 33540, *raínfid* – I read as *rainfid*
1. 33552, *cathmílíd* – I read as *cathmilid*
1. 33566, *Gerg* – I read a *punctus* after *Gerg*
1. 33566, *choícaít* – I read as *choicait*
1. 33567, *trí* – I read as *tri*
1. 33596, *á* – I read as *a*
1. 33597, *aróen* – I read as *aroen*
1. 33597, *Conchobar* – I read a *punctus* after *Conchobar*
1. 33617, *D* – I read a *punctus* after *D*
1. 33636, *immach* – I read a *punctus* after *immach*
1. 33645, *dísi* – I read as *disi*
1. 33670, *Mor* – I read as *Mór*
1. 33698, *gaet* – I read as *gáet*
1. 33707, *níro* – I read as *níro*
1. 33737, *bocóte* – I read as *bocote*
1. 33792, *fîr* – I read as *fîr*
1. 33799, *drebaing* – I read as *drebaing*
1. 33818, *urchair* – I read as *úrchair*
1. 33819, *céin* – I read as *cein*
1. 33824, *anmain* – I read a *punctus* after *anmain*
1. 33833, *sochaide* – I read a *punctus* after *sochaide*
1. 33848, *hadart* – I cannot see a *punctus* after *hadart*
1. 33904, *á* – I read as *a*
1. 33942, *muntire* – I read a *punctus* after *muntire*
1. 33959, *and* – I read a *punctus* after *and*

- 1. 33966, *imcén* – I read a *punctus* after *imcén*
- 1. 33974, *fír* – I read as *fír*
- 1. 33984, *dorochrabair*. – I cannot see a *punctus* after *dorochrabair*
- 1. 34005, *áilliu* – I read as *ailliu*
- 1. 34008, *fuídim* – I read as *fuidim*
- 1. 34050, *línfea* – I read as *linfea*
- 1. 34113, *crúadchippi* – I read as *cruadchippi*
- 1. 34115, *Conchobar* – I read a *punctus* after *Conchobar*
- 1. 34129, *Chonchobur* – I read a *punctus* after *Chonchobur*
- 1. 34153, *claidebrúad*. – I cannot see a *punctus* after *claidebrúad*
- 1. 34220, *Raith* – I read as *Ráith*
- 1. 34225, *mórbuirg*. – I cannot see a *punctus* after *mórbuirg*
- 1. 34230, *rig* – I read as *ríg*
- 1. 34232, *núall* – I read as *nuall*
- 1. 34249, *dib* – I read as *díb*
- 1. 34287, *lath* – I read as *láth*

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